

## Vile 141

### Chapter 141: Redo of a Sleeping Beauty?

Here's what happened!"

Devon began narrating the events that he knew took place between Lensa and Ken.

His beloved niece had found a date with a human kid. And the date took place yesterday on the night of the full moon.

Devon didn't seem like he was bothered by his niece having started dating or the fact that she was going on a date with a human. But his face turned grim soon afterwards when he started to describe what took place after that.

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The night of the Lensa's defloration.

Lensa had to admit. She had the best first-time experience she could ask for, thanks to Ken's dominant attitude. He had created a deep impression within her psyche.

"That was great, Ken. It may be my inexperience in this field that's talking here, but it was a view-changing thing for me.

Now I'm glad I waited for you to come into my life before deciding to just go with it. But now you'll have to take responsibility for all you've done to me, hehe!"

The not-maiden-anymore elf spoke what she truly felt from her heart. She had spoken the last sentence so she could get closer to her partner by putting the pressure of responsibility on his shoulder. She liked Ken and was hoping he would like her the same way.

Unfortunately, Ken wasn't interested. He spoke after taking a long breath:

"Lensa, this may be an unforgettable experience for you because it was your first time. But for me, it's a regular thing, if you know what I mean. And you were nothing but a clueless amateur in our entire session who didn't have a sense in pleasing their partners.

I'm disappointed that an elf can be this dense in sexual exploration. I had heard that some elves can sense their partners' feelings and act accordingly to please them more. But I guess you are not one of those elves.

And I must confess one thing to you. All this that took place between us is just due to my heavy drinking of elf ale that skewed my tastes and influenced me to come here. The elf ales that come with their signature effects shouldn't be taken lightly. I've come to realize this.

I drank the Unscented Wind Empty Mind ale that Unmi elves are famous for making. My drunk brain thought it was a good idea to meet you here at the time I was drinking that cursed drink. And all this happened here was just a consequence of that.

Let's forget what happened here. I'm sure the ale's effects would make me forget about this night too. This clarity I have right now won't be retained tomorrow when I wake up. Because I'd be forgetting everything I do under the ale's effect. At least I hope I do. Because you are not my type.

I hope you too forget about this event and never contact me again. I'll be taking my leave now.

Farewell."

Ken got up, got ready, and left the place the couple was at. Lensa, on the other hand, started looking aimlessly into the void after she heard her partner's opinion. The tears had breached the boundaries of her eyelids and were now flowing over. But she still wouldn't close her eyes.

Lensa was crying with her eyes open. She felt lost and demeaned at the same time. This was the first time she was feeling such a strong concoction of negative emotions.

What was her mistake? Blindly trusting a stranger and going what her heart wanted her to do? Or was her inexperience really to blame?

Lensa would have never thought that she could be hurt this way. Her heartbroken status had paralyzed her and her mana core was affected subconsciously.

The mana core influenced Lensa's mana circuits to freeze everything around her with an ice element spell of unknown origin. The girl just wanted to freeze everything for a while so that she wouldn't have to think of her current feelings of abandonment.

Lensa's feelings were so strong that her mana core responded by casting a spell that respected her wishes. It formed a layer of mana-imbued ice around her that was radiating a faint white light. Soon the formation of ice took on the shape of an ice slab. It had practically sealed the young elf lady entirely without any scope for her to breath.

But that white radiance reflected by the ice slab had started to turn dim, glow bright, before turning dim again in a manner that represented a breathing cycle. The breathing light effect conveyed that Lensa was indeed alive inside that ice slab.

But the young lady had stopped feeling anything. She was put in a vegetative state. And the most bizarre thing was, it was she who had done it.

Lensa had also subconsciously wished that her naked body wouldn't be seen by anyone else while she was trying to get her thoughts together. The spell had responded to her wishes by making the ice slab non-transparent in some places.

Now people could only see Lensa's face and some of her features. The rest was covered by the ice slab's non-transparent property in sensitive places. The magic cast by the young lady had stopped being magic and ended up serving her wishes to a T.

Lensa's family had started looking for her the next day when she didn't come home. Devon soon found her traces and followed those to Moonview lake.

He was going to scold the young lass for always making a scene. But it seemed that he was frozen too by seeing Lensa's condition at the place. He didn't even know what he was looking at.

All he saw was Lensa's stoic face frozen inside the ice slab that was producing the breathing light effect. He was going to smash the ice and take her niece out but was stopped by someone over the ID Stone's audio channel.

Devon didn't argue with that person's suggestion that Lensa's ice slab shouldn't be broken but instead moved to her family's estate. He didn't know why that person had called him. But he had understood that something extreme had happened to his niece.

That and the fact that the ice slab he had just seen was not normal. It was so abnormal that the person he wouldn't expect to get a call from had called him to preserve that ice slab.

Devon arranged for a few people to transport the block of ice to his family's estate while he stayed at the same place, waiting for the historian he knew to show up.

Devon wanted to know what had happened to his beloved niece who he and his family had always protected from any harm. He also wanted to make the responsible person pay the price for leaving Lensa in this state with no limits placed on the punishments.

The historian soon showed up. She couldn't get anything on the spell that had been used to cast that block of ice. But she found out what had happened with Lensa at the place, thanks to her historian-specific spells.

That's how they got to know about Ken Riverine and what he had done to Lensa.

#### **Chapter 142: Effects of Elven Ales**

Devon's historian let him know about Ken and what he had done with Lensa, including what he had said in the end. Lensa's young uncle was incensed after knowing her niece's heart was broken cruelly by this wretched human.

The fact that he was under the booze's effect didn't lessen Ken's involvement and responsibility in the situation. Devon would make sure to punish the guy who had forced his lovely niece to cut her connection from the rest of the world in such an extreme manner.

Devon left out the part of Lensa caging herself in the block of ice using the magic of unknown origin and told everything else to Almera and Eren. The fact that such a reclusive expert had called to preserve that ice from getting destroyed hinted to Devon that he should keep the spell-generated ice block a secret for now.

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The Unscented Wind Empty Mind ale was famous for giving people controlled amnesia when they were under the ale's effect. It was also renowned for changing their personalities into someone that only sought to fulfil their wishes if drunk in sufficient quantities.

The ale would first make its users feel drunk and give them a good high. But if drunk in sufficient quantities, the effects of this booze won't stop there as another phase of the effect would get unlocked.

In the next phase, the users would then be kicked out from their drunken stupor all of a sudden. They would get to experience the absolute clarity of what they wanted to do the most in their lives. The

absolute clarity also implied that they would be aware of their current state of being drunk on the ale at the time of facing their desires.

In this state, the users would seek to fulfil their desires without any bias on the pre-established opinions. That's why it was considered as one of the most hilarious or dangerous elf liqueurs depending on who drank it.

The city administration was split in half between retaining the ale on the shelves of the bar and banning it entirely. The drunkards of this booze had created many messes in the city after they were put in the state of Empty Mind after all. They had disrupted public order and caused public property damage.

But the city generated a hefty revenue from the selling of this booze. Some of its regular customers would place orders in bulk no matter how many times the city administration raised the tax on it.

So there were members of the city administration that didn't want to close this channel of hefty revenue by banning the drink. They forced the ones who wanted to do so to come to a compromise. A compromise in which they would instruct the tavern owners inside the city to control the quantity of the Unscented Wind Empty Mind per person.

As per the instruction, the tavern owners would have to stop selling the booze to a customer who was getting dangerously close to experiencing the ale's Empty Mind phase. Otherwise, they would be questioned or even may be held responsible if and when one of their patrons does something radical while under the ale's effect.

But that didn't stop most booze owners from selling the stuff like what they had been doing previously. And they would always get away by paying the right person in city administration when one of their patrons was caught in a controversial case.

What's more? The ale didn't have the usual odour of alcohol. It didn't make the user exude the smell of being drunk.

The ale meant the unscented part in its name. It was as if the concoctioner of the ale wanted people to experience clarity of mind without them feeling like they are just drunk.

The Unscented Wind was less like booze and more like a debuff potion with an additional effect or two.

All the famous elf liqueurs were like this. That's why Marla was so crazy about them. The Frostfoam ale that she had demanded from Arizihana was something the Agnoth family was famous for making.

The Frostfoam would make the user feel the most intense chill and produce frost on their skin after drinking. Soon that frost would turn into a foam before disappearing into thin air. In a way, the names of elven ales were a dead giveaway for the effects they would produce.

The ale's effect was the reason Eren had chosen the Unscented Wind Empty Mind for Ken to get drunk on. He had already bribed the tavern owner. That too using Ken's money. And made the guy pay for both of them using "additional charges".

Why should scrooge waste his wealth to get the guy drunk even when it was for his plans? The best part about this plan was that Ken wouldn't be able to deny the charges he was slapped with.

The ale was known to make changes in the user's normal personality. They would be extremely focused on getting the things they want at any cost. And they would do everything in their power to achieve that goal.

Plus, they would be aware that their clear and extremely logical state of mind was due to the ale's effect. This effect would just magnify the feelings and emotions users already had in their minds. It wouldn't alter their personality.

That's why Eren couldn't completely be rude to Lensa. Because the Ken people knew wasn't a rude or misbehaving person.

That's why Eren had selected his dialogues specifically so that they would give away that the guy was under the ale's effect. The dark knight had set the close to perfection trap for Ken to fall in. And now he was anticipating his efforts to become fruitful.

Eren made people assume that he stopped drinking before the ale's effects kicked in while Ken went overboard and kept on drinking. And since the ale's effect was potent, it changed his personality and turned him into a horndog that only wanted to fu\*ck at any cost without worrying about his partner's feelings.

Almera could only sigh in disappointment after hearing Devon's explanation. She knew that it wasn't completely Ken's fault. But she also felt that he should face consequences for his actions, even when they were done under the ale's effects.

Almera retired to her room after the explanation ended, looking at Ken with pity. The guy was too stunned to process what he had done while staying aware of his surroundings. He was trying hard to jog his memory of last night. So he didn't notice Almera's departure.

The Ace ranker from Eren's team had given her silent permission to Devon. He could do whatever he wanted with him now as long as it didn't involve something extreme.

And so it finally happened. Eren watched in glee as his arch-nemesis was getting pounded hard by the enemies he didn't make. His only regret at that moment was that he didn't have popcorn to watch this awesome show.

### **Chapter 143: Pay Per View**

"Wait... let me explain... I really wasn't... aaargh!"

"What are you doing? Grab his hands tight. I can't kick him properly otherwise."

"Aaargh. Bastard, I'm telling you. It wasn't.... aaaaaaaough... me.

\*Cough cough.\* It was your damn ale. You should have banned it aaargh ...

From getting served to..."

"Just shut the fu\*ck up and receive your reward like a man. You were so confident last night, right? Just thinking about it makes my blood boil. Guys, let's beat him up together."

"Aaaaagh! Help, Eren. Help me, man. You know I'm innocent in all this."

“Just leave that boy out of your mess, you swine. And nobody would come to save you after what you’ve done with my niece.”

For the next few minutes that felt like a breeze to Eren, he heard a cacophony of noises. But he wasn’t paying attention to any of them. He was focused on watching this nuisance of a white knight getting his ass handed to him by the goons he had indirectly hired.

Eren wasn’t aware of what had happened to Lensa after he had left her there. And Devon kept that detail out from his explanation as well. So he had assumed that the girl was just sad and brokenhearted.

Eren had assumed that the girl must have complained to her family about being treated as a cum-dump by Ken. He had remembered that Lensa’s family was influential from his previous timeline’s memories. So he knew it would not hesitate to take action against the earl’s scion, especially when he had misbehaved on its turf.

Eren finally got to enjoy the fruits of his labour. He felt all his efforts were worth it to watch this show. The scrooge was magnanimous enough to make an exception and pay with his own money this time to watch this pay-per-view in repeat.

Alas, the show ended for Eren when Ken managed to blurt out the following amid the beating he was receiving:

“Fi.... fine. Let me speak damn it. I... I am ready to take the responsibility for my actions. Where’s Lensa?

Hoh! Stop. Don’t you dare to raise that fist on me again! Otherwise forget about me ever getting myself involved with the girl.”

Ken finally managed to make the guys stop beating him with his statements. They were enough for Devon to at least let him explain himself better before he started his next round of “rewarding”

“What do you mean by taking responsibility? Brat, explain yourself better. Otherwise, the next course of your meal is going to be even more appetizing for you.”

“I mean... let me meet Lensa. I mean if I have really hurt her, let me say sorry to her. AND make amends to her.

I want to hear from her mouth what I did or didn’t do from her mouth. I’ll let you guys know how I can make amends after that.”

Ken expected his answer would get appreciated by Devon because it was based on logic and reasoning. But he would have never guessed that his answer would irk the young elf uncle more. That’s because his niece had to be awake for her to talk with this wretched guy, which she was not.

“You just like to dig your own grave, don’t you. Guys beat him some more for me.”

‘Wow! Should I gift this Devon guy a bouquet or something? The guy’s just unstoppable when it comes to beating teens.’

Eren had this thought and smiled inside his head as he watched Ken getting pounded for another round.

Eren hoped the white knight would get beaten up in front of him every time he opens his eyes in the morning. That would be a good start for the day. But alas, Ken decided to open his mouth again against Eren's wishes.

"Wait... aaargh! Hold on. For Lensa's sake, damn it. Listen to me.

Something tells me Lensa would listen to my story. I'm sure she would understand that I wasn't in control of my behaviour or function..."

"That's the problem, you dimwit. She can't talk to you. She can't talk to anyone."

Devon answered frustratingly. He knew the boy was talking sense. His point about the ale needing to get banned from the street was also hit the bull's eye.

But like Eren, Devon too had started experiencing uncontrollable irritation after looking at Ken's hero-like face.

"What do you mean? Don't tell me she di..."

"Fu\*ck you, Ken Riverine. No, my girl isn't that weak. It's just that..."

Devon denied Ken's grim predictions and sighed. He didn't know what to do with the boy anymore. One part of him wanted to beat this brat up till he died. And the other wanted to take him to his niece, hoping his presence and apology would bring her back from her icy slumber.

Finally, the rational part took over and Devon decided to come clean to Ken regarding a few things about Lensa's situation.

He first dispersed all his teammates that he had bought to the inn, including the ones waiting at the lobby. He wanted to relive Eren too but Ken demanded that his friend and Almera should stay with him.

Ken had understood that something had happened to Lensa after his "supposed" misadventure on her. He figured it was better to rely on his friends in this situation for his and Lensa's sake.

Devon decided that the guy like Eren who talked less and didn't butt into his business wouldn't spread the news about Lensa's condition any further. And Almera was even tight-lipped considering she didn't even stay there to watch her teammate getting pounded by him and his team.

So Devon invited both Eren and Almera into Ken's room before locking the door. He then told them about what had happened to Lensa after Ken's departure.

Ken and Almera were shocked. But the guy who had caused this event was in even more of a shock than those two. He had dark lines on his forehead after thinking about a possibility.

'For hell's sake, please don't turn this misfortune into a fortuitous encounter for this goddamn mother\*\*\*\*\* protagonist.'

#### **Chapter 144: Silver Lining**

"This \*\*\*\* \* fukin Ken Riverine. I should just kill him instead of petty plotting like this.

Aaaaaaargh! Fu\*k... fu\*k... fu\*k..."

Eren was raging inside his room after Devon left. He was mad and pissed with the recent turn of events. But he wasn't really angry at Ken.

He was angry at himself for inadvertently helping his enemy. Because he could see the trap that he had set for Ken was going to end up benefiting him in the end.

Eren did enjoy the rare sight of Ken getting beat up. But at what cost?

"Erni, why are you breaking stuff inside the room? You never do that. I told you. You should have let me eat Ken. I still don't understand what he did to us this time though."

Eren quieted down after he heard words of wisdom coming from his seemingly childish demon beast. She was sitting on his bed with a bowl of chips in her hand. She was munching on junk food as she watched her master make a mess out of his inn room.

Eren understood that he had lost his mind for real if Reen had to step in to talk sense into him.

Eren took a long breath and looked around him. He had broken a few things inside his inn room. His heart pained when he thought about the cost of this damage he had to pay with his money.

Losing his cool was not like him. He needed to think about things that he can do to find good in the bad. The protagonist's luck would do this for him. But the butcher needed to find his own good luck with his actions.

After Devon's explanation, Eren had realized that Ken's supposed impression on Lensa's psyche was deeper than he had anticipated. The trauma had caused her to go into a vegetative state inside a block of ice, which belongs to the magic of unknown origin.

If Eren's grim predictions were right on spot, Ken's presence was going to be the key in breaking that block of ice without harming Lensa. And knowing the guy, he would never leave a damsel in distress behind. Especially if he thought he was the cause behind it.

Eren had already committed to Devon that he was thinking of being in an official relationship with Lensa. With his attitude and the elf girl's delicately impressionable mind added in the equation, the butcher had already predicted that things would turn out to be a fortuitous affair for his enemy.

Eren didn't remember much from his previous timeline regarding Lensa's family, but he knew that it was influential. At least influential enough to not fear the consequences of messing with the earl's scion if he decides to harm one of theirs.

Ken would have another strong support to lean onto if the relationship becomes official. Eren was already worried that the guy's background was too dangerous to go against openly. With Lensa's family standing behind him as well, it might as well that he forgets about harming the strands of hair on his head.

Eren didn't find any glory in the possibility of Ken getting pre-cucked if he entered into a serious relationship with Lensa. He hadn't planned that thing in the first place. And it was not directly benefiting him either.

"Erni, am I allowed to eat Ken now?"



Reen asked while eating her chips. Eren stopped pacing around in his room and looked at his demon beast. He shook his head and massaged his forehead before saying:

"This is still not the right time, Reen. The reason I messed with Ken was not only because I have a personal grudge against him. It was the major reason, yes. But it wasn't the only one.

The thing is, this guy will just keep on climbing the ladders of social status and personal powers if left unhindered. And he'll have his biggest fortuitous encounter in some years due to those two things working for him.

I wanted to create a blemish on his image with this scene. I also had some other plans in mind so that he doesn't become a threat in the future for me when I also enter the fray to claim that encounter for myself.

But now I see that fate is a fickle mistress. She wants to create a hero out of Ken. So me getting in progress will be squatted down like a fly by him directly or indirectly, and he'll be awarded for lifting his hand.

An insect as I might be compared to those ranking monsters, I don't wish to be treated like one. Therefore, I'll give up on messing with the protagonist for now. I don't want to passively buff the airhead any further than he already is.

My life and my plans are more important than my grudges. And things in the present are more important to me than what might happen in the future.

I... I just hope this doesn't come back to bite me back in the ass. \*sigh."

Eren sat down on his bed after concluding that his previous plan of leaving Ken to his devices is the right choice even for now. He took some chips from the bowl Reen was holding and crunched on them while he tried to plan something good in the blunder he had created all by himself:

"Oh! Do you want to find out how you can make use of this situation? Let me think as well."

Reen copied Eren's gesture and massaged her forehead like him while trying to come up with an answer to her master's worries. Eren could only smile at her for thinking about his well-being.

He thought maybe all his bad habits were getting picked up by the impressionable demon beast. Maybe she'll be seen as even eviler than Eren himself in the future.

Because she doesn't acknowledge the hold of human values. She has only copied what Eren teaches her because her master wants her to blend in with his current society. Eren was having wild thoughts like this when he was interrupted by Reen's next words:

"Erni, what do you mean when you say this Ken guy and Lensa getting in a serious relationship?"

## **Chapter 145: Political Marriages**

"Erni, what do you mean when you say this Ken guy and Lensa getting in a serious relationship?"

Eren didn't have much hope from Reen with her naive mind. And he didn't see how knowing about that thing would help her find a solution for his current mess either. But he entertained her questions anyway:

"Well, it can mean a lot of things, from not-so-casual flings to tying the knot for good. But for families like Riverine and Carren, casual flings don't exist. Their marriages and relationships are always political and are formed based on mutual benefits.

I would guess that Ken would seriously consider marrying Lensa. That means he'll forever be tied to another influential family that is located here in this city, which is a strategic place for the kingdom of Edinburgh.

I was just now considering playing spoilsport. You know, create a hindrance between Ken and Lensa. That is in case Ken manages to bring his lady-to-be back from her slumber. But now that I think about it..."

"No, Erni. You didn't understand. I am asking if Ken being with Lensa would make him unable to be approached by other possible mates?"

"Um... sure. The thing about the political marriage of two powerhouses is that they are almost always based on monogamous relationships. At least for the public eye.

So yes. Ken will have to give up on his bachelorhood if and when he is engaged officially with Lensa."

Eren told Reen and had another bite of the fast food. The latter perked up after hearing what her master said:

"Is that so? Then wouldn't it be better if we push Ken into getting engaged with Lensa? Hehe!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, things would get really difficult for a certain someone you know if Ken can't be approached for another political marriage."

Reen smirked at Eren after saying that. She let her master decode what she had already said on his own while she focused on having more chips in one go. Eren was making it difficult for her to enjoy the potato chips sprinkled with roasted lamb meat the inn had delivered to their room.

"Sienna Slughorn!"

It didn't take long for Eren to figure out what Reen was trying to hint at. He was surprised by Reen's growing intelligence.

And even more surprised that he couldn't come up with the same thing on his own. Maybe the rage he had felt from his past timeline's experiences had blinded him to see things.

"That's right, Erni. Sienna Slughorn. If Ken becomes engaged, her prospects of tying their two houses go in the drain. At least that's what I've understood so far about how human societies work based on your memories."

Said Reen nonchalantly. Erni nodded at her while replying:

“You are right. In a way, it is good for us that this protagonist will be linked with the Carrens here rather than getting linked with the Slughorns.

Haha! I want to see the bitch’s face when she comes to know that her pawn was put in the different chessboard altogether.”

Eren and Reen chatted for a while before deciding on a few things about how they should proceed further. The butcher had stopped underestimating his demon beast. Her cunning was in its most primal stages but it was one that he could count on for a change of perspective.

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“Brat, what is this kid doing over here? And Ace Almera, you want to come too?”

Devon had asked Ken to meet up outside the inn the next day. So that he could be taken to where Lensa was at. But the former found that the latter was joined by Eren and Almera.

Luckily, Devon had come to the place with a four-seater carriage.

“Yes. Ken is still a team member we have. Adapt Marla would want me to ensure his safety when he is going with you. No offence to your intentions though.”

Devon nodded at Almera after hearing her response. To be honest, he was relieved. At least in their presence, he won’t murder the Riverine kid before he reached the Carren Manor.

The group of four boarded the carriage that was in front of them and made their way to the Carren manor.

The Carren Manor was a big, castle-like architecture that was home to all the members of the Carren clan present in the city. Devon took his guests to one of the most restricted sections of the manor.

A spacious hall with no furniture presented itself in front of Eren. There was a large array diagram drawn in the middle of this hall that was exuding a mild white light. A giant block of ice was seen right in the centre of that array.

The block of ice was also exuding a particular light. But unlike the unchanging mild light of the array, this one was exuding a breathing light effect.

“What should I do now?”

Ken asked Devon without getting overwhelmed by anything in front of him. The latter replied to him while shrugging his shoulders.

“We don’t know, brat. You think one of our kids getting frozen is a regular event for us?”

Ken ignored the sarcasm-laced remark from Devon and fixated his eyes on the block of ice. He could see Lensa’s face clearly and it looked like that was an uncomfortable sight for him to look at.

“Let the boy go near Lensa. The rest of you, stay where you are.”

An aged voice spread across the large hall. Eren looked back and saw a middle-aged elf man walking in from outside. When Eren looked at him, he felt like he had the most serious headache since the time he was sent back in time.

He had sweat formed on his forehead and his eyes felt like they were being stabbed by needles. Plus, his body's survival instincts were sending warning signals to him to get the hell away from this man.

'Damn it. A high ranker. Reen, don't you dare do anything while this rude ass is here.'

## **Chapter 146: Way of the Elements**

'Damn it. A high ranker. Reen, don't you dare do anything while this rude ass is here.'

Eren warned his demon beast after witnessing that middle-aged man enter the hall. He immediately figured out the guy was a high-ranked who was at least in the B-Rank or higher.

The guy didn't try to hide his ranking status either. He let his aura herald his grand entrance. Usually, the high rankers like him would contain their mana sense, mana signature, and aura within themselves in presence of the low rankers.

Otherwise, the low rankers would face the same repercussions Eren had faced just now when they came in contact with such existences. This was one of the Rankers' Codes after all.

But this didn't care about the code. Not today. He wanted to make a statement.

Ken also felt the same side effects after he sensed the man's presence. Almera was in better condition than these two. But she too looked pale. But none of them voiced their displeasure. The man was already rude and uncaring towards them. What good would it do to provoke him further?

"Ah, I'm sorry, younglings. I usually don't meet with people so I forgot to contain my aura. At ease."

The man retracted his mana sense and aura, which allowed the low rankers present in the hall to breathe a sigh of relief. He didn't pay attention to any particular low ranker though. He was focused on the block of ice in front of him.

"Go ahead, scion of Riverine. I want to see how Lensa's subconscious reacts to your presence when you go near her."

The man said this while looking at Lensa's face. His statements felt more like an order than a suggestion. Either way, Ken had to oblige. He knew recluse rankers were erratic. They would get offended over the slightest inconvenience.

Ken nodded his head to nobody in particular and walked ahead. He reached the block of ice and touched it with the palm of his hand.

An extreme shiver ran through his body after the white knight touched the surface of the block of ice. He also fell under a short illusion of standing in the middle of a valley surrounded by ice mountains. And the weird thing was that the ice was exuding a faint white light with tinges of rainbow shades making their sporadic appearances.

Ken immediately retracted his hand and the illusion stopped. He had understood one thing. What he had experienced just now wasn't just an effect due to his skin getting in contact with the ice. But due to something else entirely as the chill was felt by his soul not just his body.

'Way of the ice!'

Ken's eyes opened wide in surprise when he realized what this block of ice contained within it. The way of elements was a mana concept that was not known to many low rankers.

The way of elements was used by high ranked entities to cast their spells with. It would boost their spells to an unfathomable degree while allowing them to breach the ranking restrictions placed on the spell efficacies.

In short, the way of elements was only employed by the high ranked entities to make their spells almost come to life. And low rankers didn't stand at the pedestal to utilize it. Furthermore, the utilization of the concept was a long shot when most low rankers didn't even know of its existence.

Even a guy like Ken who had been given knowledge about a lot of ranking-related things only barely knew a thing or two about the way of the elements. That is because most of the information about the concept was only made privy to the high rankers.

And yet, an F-Ranker like Lensa had used the spell while incorporating the way of ice. How was this possible?

"Don't be so shocked, boy. Don't use your human standards to judge the calibre of an elf. Yes, it is what you think it is. Way of the ice."

The middle-aged man cleared Ken's doubts. Also, Eren's as well, because he was paying close attention to Ken's shocked face too.

"Do you mean it is common for an elf to unlock the way of the element this early?"

Ken asked while lowering his head. But one could sense the tinge of disbelief laced in his voice. The high-ranked entity didn't mind and continued:

"No. I must admit that it is still surprising for an F-Rank elf to unlock the way of elements. And it would amaze you even further when you think about the lineage that is dominant within her."

"Please explain further, Sir."

Ken wasn't aware of what the high-ranker was talking about. And ideally, he shouldn't be so casual in talking to this rude man. But he asked anyway as he wanted to know more about Lensa. Thanks to his protagonist luck, the guy explained it to him:

"Lensa is a Suryakht, or what you humans call a sun elf. The only trace of snow elf lineage within her comes from her great grandmother. And yet, she is now an ice element user.

To be honest, Lensa has dual hybrid element affinities. Light and Ice. But her ice affinity was never this prominent.

But now Lensa's ice affinity has shot up. Or it was slumbering within her and was only waiting for the right moment. Now she can give the prodigies of the snow elves a run for their money if and when she wakes up.

Sigh! No matter how high ranked we get, we can never really predict how a ranker's path can deviate from the initial estimates."

"Gramps Dan, forgive my rudeness but can we stop explaining things to this brat and focus on waking Lensa up now? It's already been so many hours since she is in that state now."

Devon butted in right after Dan finished what he had to say. The guy was in a hurry to wake Lensa up. He was worried about his niece's safety after all.

Dan finally moved his eyes away from the block of ice and looked at his impatient family member because of which the latter started regretting speaking at all. But contrary to his imagination, Dan didn't exert any ranking pressure on him and just casually blurted out:

"We don't need this Riverine boy to wake Lensa up."

#### **Chapter 147: Dynamic Dan**

"We don't need this Riverine boy to wake Lensa up."

Devon was so pissed after hearing this old monster's reply that he felt like pulling the guy's silky smooth hair and making him go bald. But he held his anger in. The guy was a recluse for real as he claimed to be.

And he didn't care much about his family members either. Up until Lensa's incident that is.

"Then please wake her up. I don't..."

"How stupid can you get, Devon brat? Why should we wake her up when she is benefitting from this self-isolation?"

'Aaaah! I should focus on breaking through ranks just so that I can beat this ass\*hole up one day.'

Devon had a red face as he clenched his teeth before finally managing to say the next words in suppressed anger:

"Then why did you tell me to bring the kid here? And what do you mean by Lensa is benefitting from getting stuck in the block of ice? I don't want her to starve to death just because there's a chance she can benefit from this."

"Hahahaha! You manage to crack me up from time and again, Devon boy. You seem calm, but there's the lava of anger bubbling inside you. I don't know how you can keep your head straight despite having such a short temper."

Devon bit his lips again and talked back:

"Gramps Dan, you still didn't answer any of my questions."

Dan's hearty chuckle turned into a mild smile before he replied to his descendent:

“Alright, alright! The reason I said she is benefitting from this situation is that she is now in a very peculiar situation. It is like the state of epiphany. But instead of the higher mana consciousness talking to you about a range of ranking subjects, it is limited to discussing the elements the ranker is affiliated to in an in-depth manner.

The state of epiphany will benefit you in your ranking journey overall. But this peculiar state will help you gain new insights in the way of elements.”

Dan looked at Devon with meaningful expressions, as if expecting him to come to the gist of things on his own.

“You mean...?”

It seemed that Devon was still struggling with the information provided to him by Dan. so the latter stopped beating around the bush and stated things clearly:

“In short, Lensa is safe and sound in this state and is gaining new insights in the way of elements related to her. And don’t worry about her sustenance boy, mana is an all-encompassing matter that is both tangible and intangible. If the ranker is capable enough, they won’t require anything else other than mana to survive and thrive in this world.

Agreed, Lensa is still not on that level yet. But the responsibility of her sustenance is being taken care of by the mana itself. Or what you call the higher consciousness. So don’t worry about her well being. At least not yet.”

“Then why the fu\*\*... Err... I meant why did we fetch an audience here? Shouldn’t we let Lensa be as she is and keep the boy away from her?”

Devon looked hatefully at Ken and stated what he had on his mind.

“Boy, have you truly initiated a conversation with mana? I don’t think you have. It is very addicting. You lose your sense of existence when you have a one-on-one with a higher consciousness. It can not be described in words.

Why do you think high ranked entities become a recluse and are so unsatisfied talking to mortals and normies? It’s because normal conversations cease to become interesting to them.

After all, we stop defining the conversation that only uses words as a conversation over time. Have you seen people who can cast fire spells use normal means to light their bonfires? It’s something like that.”

Devon’s anger was reaching new heights as he listened to the old fart rambling about his achievements. He didn’t understand what this so-called addiction had to do with his niece’s current condition. But this time he didn’t interrupt Dan and let him finish what he had to say.

“No need to become so angry with me, Devon boy. I just said all that to make you understand that Lensa needs an anchor. Someone who can keep her grounded in this world as we know it.

Otherwise, she’ll become like me. Or something much worse, I fear, considering her talents.”

Devon’s short fuse immediately lit up brightly after understanding what Dan had to say. He looked at Ken while talking to Dan:

“So this boy is...”

“That’s right. Ken should act as the anchor for Lensa. And it is always a good choice to have an anchor when you are immersed in these peculiar states.

You see, most of the things that the higher consciousness talks to you about are something that may or may not apply to you. But most of us don’t have a hold over what the mana wants to talk to you about.

So the anchor acts as a “disconnect button” to an overall intriguing conversation. It enables you to control the flow of the conversation indirectly. This control also allows you to initiate the conversation of your own will when you have enough expertise.”

Devon took a long sigh after hearing the old monster’s explanation. He didn’t know what to do anymore to take care of her niece in the best way he knew. So he looked at Ken and gave him the threat to feel better about himself:

“Riverine brat, you better hope you can become this anchor or whatever to my Lensa. otherwise, I’ll anchor your ass here for good.”

Ken felt that he was wronged. He raised his hand and pointed his finger at Devon. He was going to answer the threats thrown at him for no rhyme or reason. But the white knight was interrupted Dan before he could do so:

“Enough chit chat for now. Ken, let’s do this the way you did before. But this time spread your mana sense around the ice block and imbue your mana on your hand while you touch the ice.

I want to see how Lensa reacts when she feels your presence.”

Dan narrowed his eyes on Ken after he said that.

He hadn’t released his high ranking aura. Neither his words contained any threat. But Ken could feel that this was the most life-threatening situation he had found himself in.

### **Chapter 148: Sleeping Beauty Awakens**

“I want to see how Lensa reacts when she feels your presence.”

Dan narrowed his eyes on Ken after he said that.

He hadn’t released his high ranking aura. Neither his words contained any threat. But Ken could feel that this was the most life-threatening situation he had found himself in.

But then again, the white knight didn’t have much wiggle room either. So he stopped thinking and nodded to Dan before proceeding to act on the latter’s instructions:

‘Erni, I don’t think Ken will succeed in waking Lensa up.’

Reen spoke as Ken started walking back to the block of ice again. Eren controlled the sheer surprise of his demon beast defying his orders for the first time and spoke back to her in his mind:

‘I think I had told you to stay silent, little lass. I’m sure there’s a good reason for you to risk defying my order like this.’



Eren raised his eyebrows after he said that. One could believe that he had done that in anticipation of events unfolding in front of him. But he was put on edge because of a different matter altogether.

‘There is, Erni. Don’t you want Lensa and Ken’s engagement to take place in the future? This idiot needs to successfully wake her up first with his presence for that to happen.

But he won’t be able to wake her up. And because of that, he’ll be hated by the entire Carren clan. How will he get engaged to their girl even after she wakes up by other means after that?’

Reen said this before sounding a ‘hmp’ in Eren’s head. The butcher was looking at Dan to gauge his reactions after he talked to Reen. He only continued speaking to his demon beast after ensuring the high ranking entity’s lack of reaction:

‘You mean this guy isn’t what Lensa is looking for? And how do you know this in the first place?’

Eren again had black lines on his forehead after he heard Reen talk. He had seen a chance to finally start getting back at Sienna with his seemingly botched-up operation. But even that possibility was turning out to be dim if Reen’s observations were on point.

‘Her subconsciousness that is seeped into her mana sense is constantly looking for a particular mana signature. It is like screaming one’s name out loud when you can’t find them in a crowd.

That mana signature is your Erni. I know this because I can sense these things of course.’

Eren heard another ‘hmp’ going off in his mind. But he was too lost in his current predicament to care about any of that.

‘So you mean she is looking for me? Or my presence? But how could that be? Doesn’t my mana signature get colluded when I shapeshift? You had certainly told me so.’

Eren wasn’t a fool who’d halfheartedly start making a mess everywhere just because he had gained the unique ability of shapeshifting. He knew that there were spells and methods of several kinds that could help someone establish the identities from real to fake.

But Eren had been assured by Reen that his mana sense gets colluded when he shapeshifts. It somewhat became the fusion of his signature and the signature of the person he had shapeshifted into.

That’s why Eren had dared to shapeshift into Ken in the first place. He had weighed the risks and made sure that he didn’t leave a clue behind his misadventure. And yet, the protagonist’s luck had managed to retaliate against him.

‘I’m not sure about that either. Maybe she asked the higher consciousness to clarify the colluded mana signature. And it rectified the collusion and let her know about the real thing? As I said, I’m not sure.

Anyway! The girl is looking for you and she won’t wake up by herself until she senses your presence. I’ll follow my master’s orders now and won’t say another word. Hmp!’

‘Why are you throwing tantrums now? Anyway, thanks. And yeah, keep silent. We shouldn’t be pushing our luck here.’

Eren now had to figure out a way to wake Lensa up while making sure that it was Ken who did it. All this conversation only took a few moments in reality as it was rapid transferring of thoughts. So Ken had just touched the block of ice while imbuing his hand in unelementalized mana.

And as Reen said, no visible change took place.

“Can I tell something to my friend here that could help him wake Lensa?”

Eren suddenly spoke up after seeing that things would start deteriorating if he let them be as they were. He didn’t leave his place while doing that. Neither did he raise his head, lest the old monster finds some vague reasoning to hurt him because he didn’t follow his orders.

“Oh? And what that might be?”

Dan asked while looking at the new participant in their conversation.

“Well, the things that might have happened between Ken and Lensa are personal. So I want to talk to Ken privately regarding a few things. It might help him wake our young miss.”

Dan thought for a while and retracted his mana sense from the block of ice. Others did the same. It was a silent agreement to let Eren have a word in private with Ken.

Eren walked up to where Ken was standing. The latter was looking at him with questions written all over his face. He still had his mana-imbued palm placed over the block of ice.

Eren came close to Ken’s ears and talked random bullshit about women’s hearts and their feelings. Then he patted the palm that was over the block of ice in a gesture to encourage him.

Eren told his “friend” to release his mana sense while thinking about all the feelings of a maiden’s heart. It seemed that Ken did his best in following his teammate’s orders.

And the butcher barely grazed the block of ice “accidentally” just when Eren was about to remove his hand from the back of Ken’s palm. He also sent a tiny burst of his mana sense at the time of that touch.

So tiny in fact that one would mistake it to be an involuntary action by a low ranker. The butcher had excellent control over his mana sense deployment for his rank and age to pull this off.

And that finally did the trick. The block of ice glowed brightly before melting at a rapid pace. And the shining water was just evaporating into thin air instead of making a large pool around.

Lensa, the sleeping beauty was finally out of her self-confinement.

## **Chapter 149: Settling Conflicts**

Lensa, the sleeping beauty was finally out of her self-confinement.

The ice still covered her most sensitive parts but the rest of her body was now out in the open. And she was also showing signs of waking up.

Devon immediately called in the maids at the standby and told them to take care of his niece. The maids created a makeshift partition made of curtains around Lensa before getting her to wear clothes. When they were done, Lensa had already woken up completely and was wearing a nice-looking dress.

Lensa seemed perplexed by her current situation. Then she remembered what had happened between her and “Ken”. Her eyes became moist when she saw the reason for her heartache standing right in front of her.

“Ken brat, your work is done here. We’ll summon you when you are needed. Now get the fu\*ck out.”

Devon immediately rushed to his niece and embraced her before saying that. He didn’t even pay a glance at Lensa’s reaction.

The elf girl was looking between Ken and Eren who was standing not very far from the white knight. She felt that she was missing the only piece of a puzzle to complete it but her abrupt awakening had forced the piece to grow legs and go into hiding.

Eren breathed a sigh of relief internally after looking at Lensa’s reaction. Her bewilderment meant that his cover was not blown yet

“Ace Devon, I think you are forgetting what we had discussed. I told you I’d be happy to help Lensa as long as I get to talk to her. Now that she has woken up, I want to remind you of my part of the deal.”

Ken replied to Devon’s fuc\*k-you attitude with a stoic face. He wasn’t afraid of the guy anymore because it seemed that half of his guilt had vanished into thin air after the elf’s girl awakening.

“Brat, I told you...”

“Wait, uncle Dev. I want to talk... to Ken as well. But before that Let me get freshen up first. There are so many confusing things filled to the brim in my mind right now.”

Lensa replied before Devon could throw Ken out of the Carren Manor. The uncle took a long sigh before agreeing to his niece’s demands. He could never say no to her.

“Now that Lensa has woken up, half of our troubles are put to rest. I’m sure that is the case for you as well. We’ll let the two houses come to a mutual understanding now while ensuring their scions’ safety.

Eren and I will take our leaves now.”

Almera spoke for the first time after coming to the hall. She was relieved that a major disaster had been averted.

And she was sure that the two houses would fix a political marriage to fix this mess up nice and easy without creating a fuss that would be detrimental to both of their images. But her request to take leave was politely rejected by the sleeping beauty herself:

“Aah! I can guess what must have happened. Ace Almera, please stay here for a while so that I can talk to all of you.”

Lensa sneakily looked at Eren while she said that. For some reason, her mind wanted her to eye this seemingly unknown boy instead of looking at the real cause of her troubles. And she couldn’t understand why. That’s why she wanted to talk to Eren to understand more about him.

But she had already realized how things must have turned out because of her peculiar state. She would have to tie the knot to Ken in the future if things proceed as per their fixed course. That’s why she

couldn't approach a strange man out in the open anymore. At least not so unabashedly. The elf girl was very worried about her family's image after all.

"Al... alright. We'll wait for you to get ready. But please know that we are on a mission here in this city. And Adept Marla might summon us anytime. So we'll have to answer her call if and when that happens."

Almera relented while stating her condition. Lensa and Devon agreed to the same and arranged a living place for them to wait. Dan was silent while all this took place. He was seemingly looking at the void as if trying to think about the most mysterious thing in the world.

Then he looked at Eren and narrowed his eyes before shaking his head in denial. The guy disappeared from his place soon after. Nobody knew where he went.

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Ken and Lensa talked for a long while after she had gotten fresh. Almera and Eren gave them the privacy they needed and waited outside the room.

The white knight explained his side of the story and Lensa had to admit he didn't have any ill intentions. She then explained her side of the story which the former listened to keenly.

It seemed that Ken was the most ideal guy she could ask for. And she had already slept with him to know that he was really good in bed too. All things considered, that was one of the most important criteria for any woman to select her life partner on.

But there was something in her mind that was bothering her. She didn't voice her opinions in fear that her future husband might get offended by it. But she wanted to talk to Eren for now.

So she summoned the two waiting outside when she had a detailed conversation with Ken. The guy also seemed happy that his lady-to-be was this cooperative. He had already told her that it was a yes from his side. The ball was in her court now which the lady tackled by delaying her decision to say anything tactfully.

"Hi, there. Lensa. Hope you are feeling all better now. And I also hope that you and Ken become a thing so that the incident doesn't devolve into a family feud."

Almera laid bare what she had on her mind. The elf girl seemed open-minded and pragmatic enough for her to do that.

Lensa talked with Almera for a short while. They both smiled after knowing each others' likes and dislikes. The ranking status between the two was kept aside and the two women had a brief girl talk.

Lensa then made a strange demand:

"Um... I wish to talk to Eren privately. I want to know more about Ken, you see. And who better than his teammate to tell me about a few things regarding him that even he doesn't know or can't tell me about? Hehe!

Will... will that be okay?"

**Chapter 150: In Cahoots with the Cultists?**

“Will.. will that be okay?”

Lensa looked at the trio after stating her logical demand. Ken and Almera had smiles on their faces while agreeing to her request. Eren smiled too. But his smile had a tinge of anxiety hidden in it.

‘You enjoyed fuc\*king a virgin elf, didn’t you. Now prepare for the consequences, damn it.’

Eren cursed while sitting beside Lensa on the luxuriously plush sofa. Almera and Ken had already left the room.

“So, what’s up, Novice Lensa Carren?”

Eren started first. The more quickly he is done talking to Lensa, the better it would be for him to get away from the mess. The latter scanned him from top to bottom with her eyes before replying:

“Lensa is fine, Eren. I’m sure you wouldn’t mind me calling you just with your name either.”

‘I do mind in fact.’ Said internally before saying completely different outwardly:

“Yeah. It’s fine. What do you want to ask about Ken? I’ll tell you all that I know honestly. Hehe!”

Eren subtly moved the conversation towards Ken. He was expecting his move to achieve some form of success. But alas, the elf girl asked something else entirely:

“Eren, have we met before? Like, have you come to the city of Silvermoon in your childhood?”

“Um.. no. This would be my first time talking to you. And the same goes for my arrival in the city of Silvermoon as well. Why do you ask that?”

Eren was a great actor and a pathological liar. But even he was finding it difficult to face the girl’s inspective eyes with ease.

“It’s... it’s nothing. I just thought that maybe we have met each other before. Maybe my thoughts are in complete disarray after experiencing that state. Please don’t mind my weird questions too much.

About Ken, let’s see. Just tell me all that you know so far along with your interactions.”

Lensa finally let go of analyzing Eren. Probably because she didn’t find any chink in his armour. She finally moved to talk about Ken in response to which the latter obliged and told her all that he knew and experienced working with him.

Of course, Eren made sure that Ken is represented in the best light possible. Thankfully, he didn’t have to lie much as the boy was the perfect relationship material.

Eren took his leave soon afterwards. Lensa couldn’t help but watch his departing figure with keen interest. She still felt that there was something more than meets the eye when it came to the butcher. But she just couldn’t put a finger on it.

In the end, she let the matter go. For now at least. She’ll have to dig deep in the future when the opportunity comes. Or she’ll have to create an opportunity for herself.

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“Where did you guys disappear to?”

Marla asked with her hands folded in an inspective posture. Eren’s team was back at the inn, in Marla’s room where she had summoned them to discuss the next part of the mission.

Almera came forward and informed Marla about the recent developments that took place regarding Ken. Marla didn’t know whether to laugh or play it cool after hearing what had happened with the boy. But she couldn’t help but choose the former at the end:

“Hahahaha! You guys underestimated elven ales. Thank god, nothing major happened apart from this debacle. Otherwise, I would have had to bring your dead bodies home.

And Unscented Wind Empty Mind is the worst ale one can start elven booze with. You should have gone for Froastfoam. It’s the best and the safest option for newcomers.”

Marla wanted to talk more about the booze but then she heard Almera clearing her throat. The Adept was reminded by her assistant that she was going off-topic.

“Alright! Time to tell you about the second part of the mission. We’ll move back to LA as soon as we finish this.

From tonight onwards, we’ll each be given an area outside the city walls to keep an eye on. We are looking for cultists and their links to someone in the city of Silvermoon.

Most of the city administration doesn’t know this part about the mission and we are going to keep it that way. We’ll each leave separately just before the late evening and come here to the inn in the morning.

Don’t worry about your safety.

These days, I’ve been busy and made some preparations. I had to recon the areas to make sure that those can be areas of interest. I used some of our captives’ intel for that.

After confirming the areas, I’ve planted a few articles outside the city zone at the areas we are going to monitor.

I’ll give you a recipient artefact each. If there’s an outsider Adept or Ace ranker within a certain range, the artefacts will produce a visual signal and let you know where they are located. You’ll have plenty of time to retreat if someone you can’t handle shows up.

Almera you will follow any suspicious E-Ranker when you find them using the device. And Ken and Eren will follow F-Rankers. We’ll try to keep our cover intact and follow them. And try to capture them if the cover gets blown. Killing them is the last resort.

We’ll do the recon for the next three days. We’ll retreat to LA, whether we’ll capture a new lead or not. Is there any part of the mission you don’t understand?”

Marla asked her teammates and got no response in return, telling her that they all had understood their assignment. She nodded her head before started giving a few more in-depth details that she hadn’t shared yet.

Eren kept on listening to Marla's instructions. But a part of him was thinking about the reason that led to the secrecy they had to maintain during the second part of the mission. And he narrowed his eyes after zeroing in on the most probable one among them.

'Someone big in the city of Silvermoon is in cahoots with the cultists!'