

Vile 171

Chapter 171: Quake Element Tank

The trio of mage, healer, and tank saw Eren and Renita coming out of the waning domain of fog. They had grim expressions on their faces when that happened. They had understood that it could only mean one thing. Their rogue had lost the fight.

The emotions were opposite for Ron's team. It found newfound hope in Eren and Renita. The dual berserkers and Sharmin watched with metaphorical starry eyes as their close combat expert and ranger joined them.

A sort of ceasefire was created after Eren's entry. Both teams went on guard against each other while observing the opponent's movements. Eren used that opportunity to have a word with Ron.

"How are we doing so far?"

"Bad. These three are staying close to each other. We need to separate them and take care of them individually."

"I can gauge that on my own, Ron. What I am asking is whether you've used your berserking potions or not?"

Ron made a weird face after hearing Eren's reply. But he controlled his irritation and continued:

"We have used one potion each. And can take one more. What's your plan?"

Eren looked at Ron and Dino meaningfully after he heard that. He hesitated a bit before stating what he was thinking of:

"How confident are you in taking care of the mage?"

Ron replied immediately as if he was expecting this from Eren:

"Well, mage herself isn't the problem. I can sustain her spells while Dino goes close to her using Renita's cover fire from a distance. The problem is the healer who keeps on replenishing the mage's mana supply.

And that mage can use spell combos. And her spell combos can include triple-spell castings. Plus, she can stack her fireball spells.

And let's not forget their tank. He had made it impossible for us to zero in on any one of them without facing the consequences."

Eren assumed a wise man's pose after he heard that. He stroked his chin with his hands before concluding something about the enemy mage:

"Hmm. In short, the mage girl is hot. The healer is doing his job right. And the tank is tanky."

Ron had creases on his forehead after he heard Eren's remark. He didn't know why Eren was so chilled out when the favours were stacked against them. Especially when the guy had raised the stakes of the battle on his own, without consulting them.

“Just tell us the plan. And we’ll figure something out.”

Ron said frustratingly. He had understood that Eren must have a good plan for him to act carefree like that.

“Alright. Here’s the plan. Renita and I will approach the tank and draw him away from the mage and the healer. Then all you need to do is keep on applying pressure on them.

Meanwhile, we’ll be taking care of the tank. We’ll be almost out of mana by then. But we’ll join your battle to create faux pressure. How’s that?”

Ron could have come up with this idea on his own. But had he said that, Eren would have had to take more responsibility at his behest. Knowing the guy, he would have demanded more share from their split for his “extra work”.

But since this plan came from Eren himself, they had nothing to complain about. Ron even though Eren was a good guy trying to win this battle at any cost.

“What about Sharmin? Will he also have to join either of us guys? Or do we use him to create a foothold in the battlefield?”

Ron asked while looking at the enemy. They also seemed to be discussing something among themselves.

“I could use him but he is not fast enough to retreat and advance skillfully. And creating a foothold on the battlefield is a good idea when you have people who can take your position and relieve you. This is not one of those times.

So you take Sharmin with you. And remember, don’t slack off. There’s a chance me and Renita would be unable to join your battle after our showdown with the tank.

So try to pressure the mage from the get-go with your sidekick on the tow.”

Said Eren while looking at Dino. The latter was about to pop a vein on his forehead after he heard being called a mere sidekick. But Ron stated condition before Dino had the chance to vent his anger:

“Sure. But we’ll retreat if and when you come to join us. Our spells don’t work together.”

“Alright.”

Said Eren before talking something privately with Renita. She had a weird look after she heard what Eren said through the private audio channel. But she nodded her head to show her acceptance.

“Great! Let’s commence our plans then, shall we?”

Said Eren and bolted in the direction of the tank.

The trio was ready.

The tank was a quake element user. He was able to produce quakes in the surroundings. He was able to send those quakes through the ground, objects, and even through the air via direct contact or removing those limitations through the usage of quake-element spells.

The quake element tank saw that Eren was heading and had a huge grin on his face. It was about time he let the new guy taste the power of his spells.

The quake element tank stretched his palm open and clapped them against each other in Eren's way. Surprisingly, that clap didn't produce any audible sound. But one could see the nearby air getting distorted as a result of that action.

Eren was already briefed about the tank's ability. He immediately activated Sedated Perception when he saw that guy performing that particular action in his direction.

Eren was barely grazed by the quake waves as he almost dodged it with his time-element spell. And that slight graze of that invisible spell was enough for the mutilator to understand why the dual berserkers were hesitating to get near that guy.

The quakes couldn't be stopped by any medium or item. They could only be dodged by getting out of the path of their travel. Plus, the quakes would travel through one's body and injure the internal organs. They also held the power to affect weak rankers' blood circulation in their body.

In short, staying in the range of those quakes was bad news. And since they were as fast as sound, the rankers didn't have much leeway to dodge them.

'What should I do? The guy is a tough nut to crack even with Renita's help.'

Thought Eren as he got away from the range of the next wave of quakes heading his way.

Chapter 172: Stacked Sedated Perception v2.0?

'What should I do? The guy is a tough nut to crack even with Renita's help.'

Thought Eren as he got away from the range of the next wave of quakes heading his way. Renita was providing him cover fire so the guy couldn't completely focus on the close combat expert trying to target him.

'You want to use Stacked Sedated Perception?'

Eren heard a voice in his head. It was from the gem. The butcher's eyes lit up when he understood how using the stacked time-element spell can become a key to making the tank leave the trio's formation.

But then he immediately thought of the spell's side effect and his mood was sour. The gem understood what the guy was thinking and replied:

'I can ease the side effects. But I can help you cast only about two Stacked Sedated Perception combos before I go into slumber. And easing your side effects will remove the possibility of enabling you to cast it for the second time.'

The ball was in Eren's court now. Should he face the repercussions and save another combo usage for himself? Or should he only use the combo once and face reduced side-effects of the spell?

Eren then remembered the combo spell's side effects again and chose to go with the first option. Reduce the side effects of the combo. He let his decision be known to the gem. And it obliged.

Stacked Sedated Perception made its comeback at that time!

Eren was barely able to manage the quakes from before. But he could now see the almost invisible quakes travelling through the air with ease. He now had the time to dodge them and approach the tank.

Eren smiled after experiencing the effects of the spell. He could feel that he was more in control in the almost frozen world than before. His senses were also keeping up with slowed down time around him.

Eren had figured out by now that the gem had an agenda to help him. There was no free meal in the world. The gem was probably helping him to get something from him when it asks for it.

But Eren didn't worry too much about that for now. Right now winning this match was more important than anything for him. Especially, when he had placed a bet on so many Merps in this match.

The tank saw that the enemy close combat expert who was till now dancing on the tunes of his quake spells disappeared in front of him. His quake waves seemed to have pierced the guy, but the instances indicated that all those were Eren's afterimages.

Then the tank felt a sharp pain in his guts. He was already lifted in the air before he saw who had hit him there. His body was flown about thirty meters away from his previous position. And his fall on the ground couldn't completely eradicate the momentum.

The tank was dragged on the ground by that momentum and was thrown a few meters away from his landing spot.

Eren was still in his stacked Sedated Perception. He had kicked the guy earlier in his stomach using the Blitz Steps on hyperdrive and running Blitz Bolt through his legs. But he didn't stop there.

He followed the tank as he flew in the air. And waited for his momentum to get killed. He performed the same action again as soon as the guy stopped moving.

Eren had created a sufficient distance for the dual berserkers to attack the mage and healer without worrying about the tank. Those two were most wary of the tank because of the effect quakes had on their metal skin spell after all.

Renita wasn't even given a chance to follow Eren. She was left behind even without her knowing she was left behind. She puffed up her cheeks after seeing Eren going full-throttle on the tank.

She thought she was special when Eren had used the same speed against her. But this tank had made her realize her assumption was wrong. And she was not happy because of it.

Renita soon followed Eren's direction. Her speed wasn't as great as the current Eren, but her wind element movement spell had allowed her to be plenty light on her feet.

The tank felt like throwing up after he received the second kick at the same spot the first kick had landed. He was kind of scared after realizing the terror of Eren's breakneck speed.

But the tank's high BTP value and his strengthened body because of it allowed him to keep his cool amid the pain. He had realized that the lightning element freak was soon going to attack him.

The guy immediately clapped his hands all around him to prevent Eren from fearlessly approaching him. The quakes were sent in almost all directions and that created a dead zone with the tank standing in the middle of it.

But Eren was nowhere to be found. The tank carefully looked around but only saw Renita who was approaching him from a distance. She had pointed her mana gun at him. Her figures were just about to press the triggers.

But Renita wasn't looking at him while she pointed the gun.

She was looking over the tank's head. The guy thought of a sudden possibility and his expressions darkened as a result.

Eren was descending on the tank right below him at a rapid pace. The latter had underestimated his current speed and his heightened perception.

The tank thought his all-around quake execution was a preemptive strike. And for the most part, it was. But Eren was still able to see there was no way to get near his target without facing the repercussions of his internal organs facing the brunt of it.

So Eren used the Blitz Steps to jump high in the air. He had already sent his mana circuits on hyperdrive. Hence, the output he had achieved was exceptional this time.

The tank saw Eren approaching him from above him. And he wanted to send another wave of quakes towards him. The guy was defenceless at this point even with his crazy speed due to him being unable to manoeuvre in the air.

But alas, Eren had Renita give him her much-needed support at this time. She had already fired her mana bullets which started making their presence known on the tank's arms and legs soon after.

The tank's quake execution failed because of the interruption from Renita's cover fire. And Eren got within the striking distance from his opponent as a result.

Chapter 173: Into the Storm

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'This is it for me for now. You'll have to manage things on your own.'

Said the gem in Eren's head and went silent. But the latter didn't have time to think much about it. Especially now since the stacked spell had turned into a normal time-element spell for him.

Eren cancelled his execution of Sedated Perception as well. He didn't need it anymore. Plus, this wasn't the last fight he was going to be a part of for today. He needed to be frugal about his mana consumption.

As a result of dispelling both the time element spells, Eren was now out of the diluted world. He landed right beside the tank the next moment.

Eren had a sudden urge to kill this tank with a special derived element. After all, just like the fog guy, he too had the perfect counter against a close combat expert like him. But with so many witnesses watching his every move, he settled for only beating the crap out of him.

Eren ran Blitz Bolt at its full potential through Diceror's Right and performed a slash at the guy's torso almost vertically. The tank had worn an armour artefact so he wasn't worried about killing the opponent in the process.

The slash was only meant to make the tank go on defence. Which he did by raising his arms' bracers against the slash. The slash was stopped by the bracer. But Eren then drew out Diceror's Left and pierced the guy's arm from below with it.

Diceror's Left was lodged right between Ulna and Radius' bones of the tank's right forearm. The tip would have been out from the other end but the guy's bracer wears prevented that from happening.

But this was enough for Eren anyway. He didn't show any mercy and yanked the lodged katar towards him before twisting it.

It took a while for the tank to register the pain of Eren's mutilating actions on his body. But when he did, all he could see was a white light in front of him accompanied by the deafening noise of a whole lot of nothing.

The sheer pain had short-circuited his senses. Eren's lightning element attack also had a hand to play in it. But then his brain adapted to the pain and finally decided to process it. And that led to the tank's downfall.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaghhhhhhhhhhh."

The tank shouted from his very soul after he felt the pain in his forearm. He forgot about the fight and defending himself and just sat right then and there on his knees, holding his pierced forearm with his other hand.

The tank tilted his head back as he let his vocal cords relieve some pressure for him. But as he looked up, he saw a palm reaching his face. His body didn't feel like it should defy the palm's procession for some unknown reason. Otherwise, the consequences would be even more severe.

Eren grabbed the tank's face with his palm. His fingers spread all over his face. The gap in fingers allowed the tank to look at Eren for one last time for the day.

"Night night, mate."

Said Eren out loud and ran Blitz Bolt through his palm. With it, he made the tank experience his sought-after relief from pain.

"Two down, two to go."

Said Eren as he released the tank's face from his grip. He looked at Renita who was approaching him and commented:

"Good support. But next time, eyes on the opponent. Not on me."

Renita's cheeks turned red when she heard that. She tried to mask her blush with fake anger:

"It's... it's all your fault. You should have told me about your move sooner. I was caught off guard and had to look for you."

Eren scratched his forehead with a mirthless smile on his face before replying:

"I didn't know that I'd be able to stack my spell in that situation. That came out of the blue."

"Hmm? Which spell did you stack? And what do you mean you didn't know? This speed isn't in your control?"

"Something like that. Anyway, my previous instructions about the berserker boys still stand. Do you understand?"

Eren asked as the smile vanished from his face. Renita saw the butcher's mood suddenly changing and replied honestly:

"I do. But Eren, think about the repercussions.."

Eren shook his head before replying stoically:

"See. I'm not forcing you to go through this. Even without you, I'd be able to manage things on my own just fine. Decide. We don't have much time."

Said Eren while looking at the full-fledged battle unfolding in front of him at a distance. The mage was bombarding the dual berserkers from all sides.

Ron had managed to injure the healer with one of his berserker charges before retreating to his initial position. That had affected the recovery speed of the mage, who had now started to struggle to keep the berserkers in check.

Eren started to walk in the direction of the ongoing fight, leaving Renita behind him to ponder over. One could see she wanted to prevent Eren from doing what he was going to do. But she also knew that he wouldn't listen after looking into his cold eyes.

Renita finally clenched her fists before following Eren who had by then started running with his movement speed towards the mage.

The mage saw that Eren was approaching her from a distance and she couldn't help opening her eyes in surprise. She had thought that it might take a while, but her quake element user teammate was more than enough to take care of the guy.

She had already been proven wrong once when she had predicted the battle result between Eren and her fog element user teammate. Eren and Renita had beat him while staying in his domain.

Now the same duo had pulled another stunt and beat their quake element teammate as well. Therefore, it'd be a cold day in hell before the mage made the same mistake and underestimated this simple-looking Novice ranker coming towards her like an unstoppable force.

Eren saw a barrage of fireballs heading his way when he was within the mage's area of influence. This time, he didn't dodge. He didn't take any detours.

Renita was right behind Eren, following him in his path. And all she saw was her heartthrob getting bombarded by the fury of stacked fire-element spells.

"Eren!"

Her shrill cry echoed in the battle ring and outside it.

Chapter 174: Backstab

“Eren!”

Renita’s shrill cry echoed in the battle ring and outside it. She thought the guy had gone mad. He wasn’t exactly his 100 percent due to the two battles he was part of. And yet he had gone right ahead to duel with the mage who was clearly in a better condition than him.

That too in a front clash, when the mage held the advantage because of her AoE spells. Renita could only think of one thing when Eren pulled that move:

‘He wasn’t counting on my support this time.’

Unbeknownst to her, Renita’s eyes were moist. But before she could process those emotions, a storm of lightning lit upright in the middle of the domain of fire.

The domain created by the fireballs was soon breached by a person who only had a chainmail armour worn on his torso now. And that chainmail armour had gotten slightly red due to the effects of the mana generated fire.

Eren had come out from the other way of that barrage of fireballs. The skin of his torso was sizzling and getting burnt due to being in contact with the chainmail artefact he had worn under his clothes.

Eren quickly removed the artefact and stored it inside his storage. Most of his clothes were burnt off. Thankfully, he had protected the area around his groin by covering it with a layer of mana. So he was saved from being a laughing stock in the academy.

But that’s not all he had done. Eren might be a masochist when he needed to be. But he was never suicidal. That’s because he had already executed one of his spells before heading right into the storm of fire.

Blitz Heal!

The lightning element healing spell was running at its full effect and trying to mend his scorched and burnt skin. As a result, his bare torso had loads of tongues of lightning dancing over it.

Of course, it didn’t do anything to make Eren suffer less in the fire. One needed a special kind of mindset to knowingly harm themselves for the sake of their benefits, even when they knew they could be healed later on.

In his current condition, Eren looked like a thunder god if he was a teen and short-statured. But he didn’t care about his appearance. He had shown his performance to the mage to create deterrence in her mind. To show her that he could survive the worst she could do to him.

And that temporary deterrence showed its effect. The girl subconsciously faltered when she saw the madman coming for her.

She started retreating backwards to create a safe distance between them. Eren only smiled after looking at the intended effect of his showmanship taking place right in front of him. He shouted at the dual berserkers:

“Dino, Ron. Now!”

Dino and Ron were standing at the other side. They quickly understood what Eren was trying to do and approached the mage from two sides, trying to box her in.

Everything happened within a few moments.

The mage saw that she was soon going to get surrounded and had a determination filled in her eyes. She summoned another volley of fireballs around her and let her surroundings get consumed in them by detonating them all at once.

She thought she would be safe inside her domain of fire. Unlike Eren, her clothes were fireproof because of the element-specific rune inscriptions on them.

Dino and Ron immediately got consumed in the storm of fire along with Eren. All three are from different directions.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaghggggg”

“Aaaaaah!”

Unlike Eren who didn’t utter a word despite his third-degree burns, Ron and Dino were pretty vocal about their situations. Their metal skin spell had again become their bane as the spell retained the effects of fire landed on it like a usual metal.

Both of the berserkers somehow survived the firestorm. They survived by casting the metal skin spells on themselves for a short while before quickly dispersing it, then executing them again.

They thought that now that they had crossed the domain of fire and closed in on the mage without her healer on the tow, things would soon move to the up-and-personal battles.

Both of them activated their metal skin spells once again. And then approached the mage who could be barely seen standing in the middle of the firestorm.

Dino and Ron nodded at each other before recovering their berserking potions. They had already started running towards their opponent who was gearing up another stack of spells by overdrawing on their mana.

The berserkers were about to gulp their potions down. The mage was almost finished casting her stacked fire-element spells.

But suddenly Eren came right in between them. He spread both his arms and murmured something to himself that his audience of three people couldn’t hear:

“Blitz Storm!”

Said Eren and then smiled at the berserkers. Dino and Ron were confused at first before opening their eyes wide in surprise.

This was the biggest betrayal they had faced. That's because they were within Eren's AoE spell when he executed it to supposedly target the opponent mage.

The opponent mage was hit by Eren's AoE spell too. She had already overdrawn on her mana. Plus, now she had to face the consequences of failed spell execution while facing the butcher's lightning spell.

At least to say she wasn't expecting Eren to cast such spells while his teammates were within the range. That's what caught her off guard. She was expecting Eren to hold onto his spells when he got in close range along with his teammates.

But who knew Eren had this planned from the beginning of the match?

Eren's Blitz Storm was detonated at this time, engulfing friends and enemies alike. Both sides were beaten and battered. So when the AoE went off, it made double the impact.

Ron, Dino and the enemy mage were zapped till their irises dilated. They were mere moments away from losing their consciousness.

Chapter 175: Budding Emotions?

Sharmin was observing the battle with his mana sense as was the enemy healer. They looked at each other from a distance, with surprise and confusion written all over their faces.

The healer was the first to move. She tried to help her friend by going quickly near her but she was stopped by Renita's mana bullets. She bit her tongue as she halted her advance.

But then something amazing happened. When Sharmin tried to do the same, Renita fired bullets just below his feet too, subtly hinting that he should not approach the dual berserkers.

Eren had told Renita to hold everyone off when he executed his AoE while the dual berserkers were within the range, under the guise of targeting the mage. This was an act of betraying the alliance.

Eren team might never be able to ally with the rest of the good teams in their academic years. And Renita tried telling Eren that as well. She knew he had understood that too.

And yet he still chose to go with his self-harming strategy. The guy had planned this from the beginning when Ron and Dino had first approached him.

Eren had proposed a bunch of weird conditions while he was negotiating an alliance with Ron's Raiders. One of those conditions was survival of the fittest.

If anyone from Ron's team were to get neutralized in the battle, they would have to relinquish another ten percent from their split per head. If two of the teammates from either team get neutralized in the battle, they'd lose 20 percent in total.

Of course, Eren made him and Renita get included in the same condition as well. That's how he made his conditions get okayed by the dual berserkers.

The 10 or 20 percent might look small individually. But when the Merps of this amount were at stake, the 10 or 20 percent became the difference between day and night.

Dino and Ron fell unconscious followed by the mage after facing the burnt of Eren's AoE spell. Eren could now claim the split of 85:15 in his favour by making the dual berserkers his prey.

Eren had not only taken another small revenge on his enemies, but he had also benefited from doing the same. Plus, the butcher didn't want to ruin his image by openly betraying his alliance members. So he came with this compromise.

Eren would still be doubted for his intentions by some students if not all. His sketchy way of executing his spell at the wrong time was questionable.

But that would always stay as doubt and an open topic of discussion. Because there was no way to predict what would happen to the battle if he didn't make use of the opening the mage had kept open.

When the storm of fire subsided, Eren was the only one standing. Albeit with a pale face and haggard stance. His clothes were almost gone. His body's skin had tongues of lightning dancing over it, a sign of his healing spell getting executed at the time.

"Renita, what is the meaning of this?"

Sharmin asked Renita with a lot of emotions written all over his face. The most dominant among them was anger that he was barely keeping in control.

"I was only looking after you. That domain of fire wasn't something you could barge in and come out with your own will."

Said Renita and then pointed at the opponent healer:

"Besides, I think we should take care of her first instead of settling our disputes now."

Sharmin looked at the healer who was gripping his staff with both his hands as if anticipating an attack from any direction. Sharmin was already pissed at Eren. so he directed all his rage on the opponent. It didn't take long for the tank to neutralize the healer.

Eren's first inter-year battle of this timeline was won. With only three of his teammates left standing including him. All because he didn't forget to have one up over his assaulters of previous life while ensuring his benefits.

"Eren you shouldn't have..."

Renita spoke softly as she approached Eren. She was looking at his current condition. The guy was barely standing on his two feet.

But the butcher didn't let her continue. He spoke up before the ranger had a chance to complete her sentence.

"Renita, I know what I have done. It's selfish and petty. And we might face problems in the upcoming inter-year wars. But I needed to do this."

Said Eren and held Renita's shoulder with her right hand for support. He let his entire body weight fall on her because he felt like his legs had become a jelly. The ranger supported him while having butterflies in her stomach because of her intimate proximity to Eren.

“Why? I don’t see why you want to set yourself against Ron and Dino. They were just your opponents. And this alliance was based on the fact that both sides could look past what happened in that match.”

Renita was having a difficult time keeping her excitement in check. But thankfully, Eren’s replies made it easy for her to do just that. That was because his answers were creating more questions for her.

Eren sighed. Then he opened the audio channel with her and continued in private:

‘Let’s just say I want them riled up on me. It’s personal and you wouldn’t get it. Nobody would.’

Said Eren and looked at the dual berserkers lying unconscious on the ground. He could see LA’s caretakers were approaching the injured for treatments.

Renita also followed Eren’s gaze while mustering the courage to say what she was about to say:

‘I would get it, Eren. if you could just open up to me. At least I’ll try.’

Renita was still looking at the scene unfolding in front of her- the caretakers approaching, then using potions to start healing the injured and trying to fix all the visible injuries. But one could see that she wasn’t paying attention to any of the things.

Eren looked at Renita after he heard that. He had a slight change of heart after he understood what she was trying to say to him.

Renita wanted to be with him. She wanted to be with a broken and cynic person like him without any seemingly hidden agenda.

Chapter 176: Lovebirds & Right Words

Some of Eren’s emotions that he thought were long dead showed signs of their existence in his heart. But he shook his head before smiling mirthlessly:

‘Well, some injuries can’t be seen with eyes.

The usual remedies stop working on those injuries because they turn into scars that stay forever with you, no matter what you do.’

‘Eren, try to trust your friends more. And I can become your confidante if you have some stories that you don’t want to share with everybody.’

Eren’s eyes met Renita’s and the latter’s heartbeat increased. The mini staring contest only lasted for a few moments. Eren flashed a genuine grin at the ranger and said out aloud without using the audio channel.

“Renita, some stories are written more for the writer than they are for the readers.

That being said, you have earned my trust with your actions today. And it is difficult for me to trust somebody. I don’t know about being my “confidante”, but let’s become friends first that are more than just teammates and rivals.

We’ll think about sailing the boat when we are on the shore.”

Renita also smiled after she heard Eren’s statements. She was expecting the recluse Eren to act again.

Perhaps her act to follow Eren in his plans despite there being no advantage for her in doing so had enabled her to get close to him, even if just a little. Any progress was better than no progress for her.

“Friends then!”

Renita said while flashing a grin. Eren returned that with a mild smile of his own before replying:

“Friends.”

“If you two lovebirds are done talking, can we ask you to get treated first? Before you go get a room with those injuries and worsen them.”

Said one of the caretakers while smiling at the seeming couple. Eren’s jelly legs found some strength in them after he saw the lady caretaker looking at them with mischief while teasing them. He let go of using Renita as his support and somehow stood on his own.

Renita too straightened up her clothes and hairdo for no apparent reason before saying to Eren:

Get treated Eren. you need it. I’m mostly fine so a consumable potion should do the trick.”

Saying that Renita snatched the potion vial from the caretaker’s hands and walked out of the battle ring in a hurry. Eren stayed there with the caretaker to get treated with her healing spells.

But he wasn’t the only one who was getting healed. Ron walked up to him while he was being treated. The berserker wasn’t completely fine. But he was trying his best to get the answers he needed from a certain wretched person.

“Eren Idril, Dino had told me that you were a cunning, manipulative, son of a bitch. But I didn’t listen to him and got on board with your plan. We did everything by your rules. Yet you backstabbed us.

Why?”

Asked Ron with his menacing gaze. Eren had already expected a question like this. So he just shrugged his shoulders and replied nonchalantly:

“I think you are stretching it when you say I betrayed you. I wanted to catch the mage off guard. She would have bombarded me before I could get close to her. Plus, I was running out of mana after dealing with two rankers back to back.

I saw the mage had left an opening in her defence when she was concentrating on you guys. I saw my chance and took it.”

Said Eren and shifted his body a little to allow for the caretaker’s healing spell to treat the blistering injury he had received on his back. His behaviour irked Ron even more.

“Who are you trying to fool? I would have believed you if it wasn’t for the condition you had placed earlier in our alliance contract.

But looking at things now, you must have pre-planned this. At least have the guts to admit that you had planned to screw us from the beginning.”

Eren returned Ron’s sharp gaze with his cold eyes before replying:

“You know why I don’t have to answer you? It’s because I and Renita have carried you guys in this match. You couldn’t do shit to Roody’s Wreckers. And things would have been uglier had I not used MY battle pass.

Tell me one thing before you accuse me of anything. What did you guys do in this match? What is your contribution? Holding the opponents off so I could do your work for you? Is that it?”

Eren purposely used his mana imbued voice to reply to Ron’s accusation. This was to make others realize the importance of his and Renita’s presence in the match.

He knew his actions could be interpreted in a completely different way with the use of the right words. A trick he had been underestimating almost all of his adult life.

Ron was tongue-tied after he heard Eren’s rebuttal. He had no answer to Eren’s accusations, same as Eren had no answer to his. But the difference between the two was Eren was the one with the closing argument.

“This is not over yet, remember this Eren Idril. And you don’t need me to tell you that our alliance is over.”

Ron started walking to Dino who was still getting treated. He had regained his consciousness but was in no condition to stand up yet.

“Hold up, Ron. You are forgetting something.”

Said Eren after he got up from his seated position. He dusted off what remained of his trousers and continued

“Our alliance stays intact until all our team members fight in the respective squads we have divided them into at least once. You can only break the alliance after that. This is one of the clauses of the alliance contract.”

Ron froze in his tracks after he heard Eren’s words. He regretted not listening to loudmouth Dino’s pestering.

Ron should have read the terms and conditions of the alliance contract carefully before signing over it. Now his negligence was going to bite him back in the ass.

Chapter 177: Collateral Damage

“Team Steve’s Stunners wish to use a battle pass.”

Steve announced firmly before the referee. He looked at Eren standing outside the battle ring in the crowd of the audience after he did that.

The butcher nodded at Steve after that declaration, giving him the confirmation he needed to proceed as planned. Steve Stunner had three of the White Raven Crew’s regular members- Steve, Becky, and Jake. The other two positions in the squad were filled by the regular members of the Ron’s Raiders.

“Eren Idril, what is the meaning of this? Why are you using your remaining battle pass on a losing team?”

Ron, who was standing not far from Eren couldn't help ask Eren about his latest scheme. The latter chuckled at him before replying:

"You say that our alliance is going to stay in effect after the mandatory matches. I'll use my battle passes however I want. That's not for you to decide anyway, whether the alliance stays or disperses."

"But what will you gain by using the battle pass on the losing team?"

Ron was still trying to make sense out of Eren's actions. By now he had understood that everything Eren did was somehow preordained to be extremely advantageous to him.

"Who says Steve's Stunners are going to lose?"

Eren asked Ron with plain expressions on his face. He looked as if it was getting boring for him to talk to the berserker.

"You mean the battle pass that Steve is going to use is that potent?"

"*Sigh. Well, I'll give you a hint. Remember the clause that we had for the squads we deemed as losing squads."

Ron then tried to again recollect the contract he had with Eren regarding the alliance. The clauses seemed to have been the key. His mind slowly processed the advantages Eren would gain after this losing team stops being a losing team.

Ron and Eren had divided their teams into multiple squads. As per their agreement, or according to how Ron's team was made to interpret, only the squad Eren, Renita, Ron, and Dino was part of was supposed to win the inter-year ranking war, cutting the team's overall losses.

The rest of the squads made up of the rest of the members from White Raven Crew and Ron's Raiders were termed as bare-minimum gangs. They were only meant to participate in their compulsory inter-year ranking wars and be done with them for the time being.

That's why Ron didn't object when Eren proposed that both their teams would bear the betting amount value individually as per the Squad Leader. That meant the squad Steve was leading would have its entire betting amount paid by members of White Raven Crew. Ron's Raiders would have to pay the betting amount for the squad their team member was going to lead.

Of course, that also meant that in the event of the squads winning their matches, the winning amount would go to the team who had paid the betting amount. This was one of the clauses of the alliance contract set specifically for the bare minimum gangs.

Ron didn't find anything wrong with the clause at that point because either team was not gaining or losing anything because of their clauses. But that equalization was based on the fact that all the bare minimum gangs either won their matches or lost them.

But what if the squad White Raven Crew was responsible for winning their matches while the squad Ron's Raiders was in charge of losing theirs? Then that would benefit Eren even more, and all the consequences of losing the matches will only be carried by Ron's team.

Ron's rage was influencing him to forget about LA's rules and attack the wretched bastard known as Eren Idril right then and there. He had shafted him and his entire team with the kind of manipulation he had woven into the very fabric of the alliance contract.

"The battle passes!

You sly bastard, which one is it? The fact that you didn't use it in our match and let Steve have it to be used in his match means it is better than the one you had used earlier. Tell me which damn battle pass you handed over to your berserker."

Asked Ron while clenching his fist. His nails had dug into his skin as a result, making his hand bleed a little. But Ron was too angry to care about the self-inflicted injury he was currently suffering from.

"Why don't you find out yourself? Look."

Eren didn't mind the derogatory term he was assigned and pointed at the battlefield without looking at the angry berserker. Ron had to follow his direction and pay attention to the scenes unfolding on the battlefield again.

The referee confirmed the battle pass Eren had shared with Steve on his Spectral Screen and nodded before announcing loudly:

"Steve Austin is using the battle pass Collateral Damage. He can make up to three members of his team leave the battlefield. In exchange, his opponent team would have to withdraw one additional member in addition to the same number.

Steve, you can now choose the members of your team as well as that of your opponent's team that will withdraw from the match."

Ron's face lost its colour after he heard the referee's announcement. This battle pass was tailored to pave the way for Eren's betrayal.

Objectively looking, the battle pass Keep One Out Eren had used in his match had more value than the one Steve was going to use. That's because Eren's battle pass didn't demand a sacrifice from his team to inflict damage on his opponent.

Collateral Damage was more useful only when the squad was confident in fighting with a reduced number of people than its projected arrangement. No other team would normally use this kind of battle pass as it would synchronize its teamplay heavily.

But Steve, Becky, and Jake were perfectly fine with the other two members from Ron's Raiders getting eliminated. They preferred it that way too. That's because they were expecting the same form of betrayal from those two members as the one their hidden leader had pulled on their team in his match, should they be allowed to battle in Steve's squad.

As he expected, Steve chose the only two members of Ron's Raiders to get withdrawn from the match. And in exchange, he was allowed to eliminate three members of the opponent team even before they started with the match.

Steve did what he was asked to do by Eren and eliminated three battle oriented rankers from the opponent's team without wasting time pondering over it.

Now Steve's squad had three members including him while his opponent had only two. And one of them belonged to a non-combat class, a healer.

Steve had already set a hefty betting amount before the start of the match. And least to say, his squad won the match, raking in a big haul of Merps.

The next match the alliance fought had a member of Ron's Raiders serving as the squad leader. It was a seven-person squad. Ramy, Ana, and Bell were part of this squad. Needless to say, Eren's winning streak ended at this point and the squad lost big time.

But the butcher didn't plan on making the squad his remaining members were part of to win their battle anyway. He was okay with his newbie members testing the taste of defeat while ensuring that Ron's Raiders get almost a whole lot of nothing from the alliance.

With this, Eren had made the maximum use of battle passes he had earned. He had even scored profit from the one that was self-inflicting in nature.

Chapter 178: Does the Pursuit of Power Need a Reason?

"This goddamn mother****ing Eren Idril has fu*cked us over one too many times now, Ron. I don't care what you say but..."

"Dino, I agree with you. This wretched man needs to be taught a lesson for messing with us."

Dino was pacing around in the courtyard of their dorm house. Ron was sitting idly at the nearby bench, looking at his friend with cold eyes. But the coldness radiated from them was not directed at Dino. it was meant for someone who had screwed their team and him while keeping a straight face doing it.

Dino was surprised that Ron agreed with his opinion. He stopped his pacing and asked to confirm:

"You do? Then tell me the plan, already. I don't know about the others, but I'm in for sure. If we can catch him off guard..."

Dino's eyes radiated the pure excitement he felt from just thinking about enacting his revenge on Eren. But that excitement was soon reined by Ron's next words:

"You do understand that jumping on any of the LA students would get us kicked out from the academy, right?"

"Don't tell me you are just letting him go just like that because of these rules?"

"When did I say that? I'm saying you don't have to be stupid to get your revenge."

Said Ron and got up from his position. He then started heading inside his home before stopping to look at his friend.

"I have already gotten some information on him. His daily chore includes going on border patrol. You know what I mean by that."

Ron flashed a devilish grin at Dino who couldn't help return that with heartfelt laughter.

"Hahahaha! Yes, what happens in the forest, stays inside the forest."

Dino followed Ron inside the dorm house after that. They had decided that they would not let Eren treat them like some disposable pawns without facing any consequences.

What they didn't know was that Eren was baiting them to target him. The butcher didn't know how or when the dual berserkers were going to attack him. But he was counting on them to do just that sooner than later.

After all, all good hunters never follow their prey around. They just set their trap in anticipation and wait for them to fall into it.

"Eren, you shouldn't have irked Ron's Raiders, man. I mean I do like that we raked in a hefty amount of Merps. But will it be beneficial for us in the long run?"

Eren's team was at their usual place of training. They had come together to meet up in the evening, a day after their first inter-year war.

Becky was scrutinizing Eren's actions and she was not alone at it. Others were in silent agreement with her. That's how she got the confidence to speak in front of Eren who was observing his teammates silently.

Renita pitched in right after that:

"Hate to admit it, Eren. But Becky is right. We have pissed off a lot of second years with our high betting amounts and then won them back with even higher prize money.

Plus, the other top first-year students would hesitate to tag-team with us after they have seen how Ron's Raiders ended up allying with us.

*Sigh. We have won big, there's no doubt about it. But we will have to brace ourselves for the consequences heading our way."

Eren was quiet at that point. He had the sudden urge to start his old habit of smoking the roll of fire-cured leaves listening to his teammates' complaints. He rolled his eyes before finally speaking up:

"There will always be consequences, guys. No matter what you do. Even the act of inaction can lead to some severe consequences. Trust me, I know this better than you do.

So all you can do in this case is choose your actions right and anticipate the consequences. At least in this way, you are in control of what's coming for you."

Becky shook her head right after Eren said what he said. She took a long breath before replying:

"Eren, that's a euphemism. What you say makes sense, but it isn't practical. We had no reason to pick a fight with Ron's Raiders. Even with normal winnings, we would have still benefitted aplenty.

Why go for sudden profits when your regular income is steady and enough for your sustenance?"

Almost everybody agreed with Becky except Renita and Ramy. Renita was already an ambitious girl even before meeting Eren. and meeting him had only amplified that drive.

Ramy had become a staunch Eren supporter now. He would agree to anything Eren would say and do.

The guy with the lisp had become Eren's yes-man. That's why his teammate had asked him to keep quiet. That and the fact that his speeches would often turn the serious mood into one of uncontrollable laughter.

Eren looked at Becky while narrowing his eyes. It looked like he was trying to decide on something in his mind. Then he shook his head before putting his point forward:

"Why go for sudden profits when your regular income is steady and enough for your sustenance? Hahaha!

Becky, if you want to stay mediocre, do it after you get out of the academy. Don't try to drag me or my team members into that mediocrity with you.

These are precious years of our lives. We need to grab every opportunity we could get to make it big after we get out of the academy. And staying low-key all the time won't ever let us become the best version of ourselves.

I get that you prefer steady progress over these types of risky moves. And I can understand where it is coming from. Rankers can be revenge-seeking animals after all.

But staying in your comfort zone all the time will make you a toothless tiger in the future. Your ranking journey would stagnate with an attitude like yours.

The rankers' society has restrictions. And low-level rankers like us get the brunt of it.

But the same restrictions become less restrictive as we climb the ranking ladder. Why is that? Because a single high-ranker can have a say over a bunch of low-rankers due to his exceptional individual powers.

The Merps I have now will help us get close to achieving that power. You will come to know about this in the future."

Ana was the first to talk after she heard Eren's speech that sounded like a prediction:

"But why seek a faster route to the ranking journey at the cost of hurting or making an enemy out of others?"

Ana blinked innocently after she said that. And Eren felt like he had a headache listening to her question. He massaged his temples gently with his fingers before replying:

"Why do you need a reason to seek power? You seek power because it's the most fundamental part of our lives. Money, political power, social status, are all secondary to ranking prowess.

Remember this from now on. Don't try to seek the reason behind why you want to become a powerful ranker. Treat it as your necessity to live a life that is worth living.

Your kindness has no value if it stems from your helplessness. Only when you are powerful enough can you be allowed to be kind."

Said Eren and walked towards the check-post that would allow him to get outside LA grounds. It was about time he visited Agatha and checked on her progress. His departing figure was thought-provoking in the eyes of his teammates.

Chapter 179: Fruits of Labor P1

“Uncle Jack, how’s the progress so far? Agatha doing good?”

Eren asked Jack Sullivan, Jake’s father. He was at the latter’s shop in the city of Lionhearts. Agatha was working as Eren’s contact and one of the store managers.

“Yep. Everything’s fine. The channels have been established. I have taught Agatha a few things about the work we do here. The girl is a fast learner. She is picking up everything at an exceptional rate.”

Agatha had started living on the upper floor of the shop. Eren had arranged everything that was needed as a daily necessity for her. The trio was now gathered at her place for the talk.

The Anthrope wasn’t happy her master was asking a third-person about her progress. She preferred that he ask her directly. But to Eren, Jack’s perspective was more important.

“Good. Don’t worry. I will send you consistent supplies of goods through Agatha. You just make sure that you only sell my goods to your trusted sources. We don’t want things to go out of hand and attract heat unnecessarily.”

Jack nodded and agreed with Eren’s words:

“Yeah. your products aren’t meant for a mass audience anyway. The potion bombs already have a steady purchase channel. It is stalked by nobles and some authorities of the kingdom.

Your aphrodisiac vials can also create a rift between the shop and female rankers. So that is something I’ve kept under the counter as well. Of course, unlike the potion bombs, these products have more customers. And they can be sold for a huge profit margin.

So keep on churning these products. Hehe! If Jake learns the potioneering from you and gets just as good, our profits will double.”

Eren nodded before replying:

“That is indeed good to hear. Don’t worry about Jake, uncle. He’ll be a good potioneer. But he needs time. And I would prefer if you take Agatha with you whenever the selling of my products is involved.

I also had some other work that I could use your help with.”

Said Eren and looked expectantly at Jack. the latter just patted the teen’s shoulder before answering:

“Don’t be shy, young man. This old merchant has a lot of contacts. I’ll take care of whatever you need. Just say the word.”

Jack assured Eren with his merchant smile and attitude. The latter just nodded his head as if he was only waiting for those words to get spoken by the merchant before saying

“Alright. I won’t hold back then. I want C-Rank potion bombs or killer arrays of the same rank, at least two of them. When can I get them?”

Jack was still smiling when he heard Eren’s words. But that smile soon broke into an ugly expression when he heard Eren’s demands. He stuttered in a speech to confirm what he had just heard:

“Y... you want C-Rank potion bombs?”

Eren nodded plainly before explaining:

“I know C-Rank potion bombs are weapons of mass destruction. So I won’t press on that demand. But I believe C-Rank killer arrays can be arranged. I want the ones that are meant for slaying the beasts of the same rank without injuring their bodies.”

Jack regretted boasting about his contacts to Eren. He smiled mirthlessly before trying to explain to the teen the hurdles in getting those things:

“Eren, what you said about the potion bombs applies to the killing arrays as well. It’s just that the killing arrays for animals are relatively easier to get. That too is only applicable if we are talking about F or E-Rank animals and killing arrays. Things get exponentially difficult to get when they reach D-Rank. Yet, you want C-Rank items, which would be even more so.

And you even need two of them. Even with my underground and black market contacts, they’ll not be easy to get. Plus, the kind of Extols we are talking about buying those things...”

“Oh, money is not the problem, uncle Jack. Just locate them and get them as soon as possible.”

Eren cut the merchant off in his speech and fast-tracked his purchase order. The latter had no choice but to just give up on explaining things to the teen.

That’s because he believed that Eren would have the money to walk the talk if he had said so. Now he had to again deal with the shady people in a shady way to make the boy’s wish come true.

Jack wondered if Eren being friends with his son was a good idea.

‘Too late. Now I’m stuck with this dangerous kid.’

Said Jack to himself and left Eren and Agatha to their devices. The master and slave had a few things to talk about.

Some weeks after Eren’s visit to the city of Lionhearts.

Eren completed his training regime with exhaustion coursing through his veins. He laid flat on his back over his courtyard’s ground and recalled his status window.

Name- Eren Elijah Idril (Verified)

Organization- Lionhearts Adventurers’ Academy

Academic Status- Class 1/C

Ranked Status:

Intra-class individual- 11th Place Holder

Intra-class team-based- 3rd Place Holder

Inter-class individual- 23rd Place Holder

Inter-class team-based- 16th Place Holder

Inter-year individual- Unranked

Inter-year team-based- 37th Place Holder

Merit Points- 36,549

Base Stats:

HP- 4.6 / 4.6

MP- 5.5 / 5.5

STR- 2.9

AGI- 4.7

INT- 3.5

BTP~ 21

BTP Visibility- Private

Ranking Technique- Five-star, lightning element, Indra's Levin

F-Rank Spells:

Lightning Element, Four-star, movement type: Blitz Steps

Lightning Element, Four-star, defence type: Blitz Shield

Lightning Element, Four-star, attack type: Blitz Bolt

Lightning Element, Four-star, Area of Effect: Blitz Storm

Lightning Element, Four-star, healing type: Blitz Heal

Time Element, Four-star(?), miscellaneous: Sedated Perception

Time Element, Three-star, miscellaneous: Ingredient Age Expedite

Time Element, Two-star, miscellaneous: Ingredient Age Reverse

Time Element, Three-star, movement type: Stunning Speed

Fire Element, Four-star, attack type: Firesnake

Fire Element, Four-star, attack type: Fireball

Fire Element, Four-star, attack type: Firebreath

Apprenticeship: Verified

Daily Training Regime: Complete

Run: 5KM / 5KM

Pullup: 500/500

Situp: 500/500

Pushups: 500 /500

Planks: 30 minutes / 30 minutes

Stretching Position 1: 5 minutes / 5 minutes

Stretching Position 2: 5 minutes / 5 minutes

Stretching Position 3: 5 minutes / 5 minutes

Eren felt that sought-after high one feels after working out after he looked at his BTP value again. All his hard work and his extended technique practising sessions weren't failing him.

He was just three units away from entering the upper stage of the F-Rank.

Chapter 180: Fruits of Labor P2

Eren was just three units away from entering the upper stage of the F-Rank.

Of course, he knew that the path of a ranker wasn't so linear. There existed bottlenecks and lack of experiences in one's field, preventing most rankers from quickly progressing further in their ranking journeys.

So what he considered to be merely three units of difference in BTP value might turn out to be a huge mountain to scale for him. But he wasn't discouraged by that realization.

After all, this was Eren's personal best in ranking progression in terms of speed. He would have never thought that he would be able to get this close to the upper stage of the Novice rank this early in this timeline.

Eren figured that his current hard work or past timeline's experiences weren't the only reasons for his surprising progress. He could feel that the transformation he had been through by fusing with Reen also had a hand to play in it.

'The pursuit of power doesn't need a rhyme or reason.'

Thought Eren to himself and smiled. Then he looked at his ranking status and the same smile grew wider.

Eren had performed breathtakingly in his ranking wars. The low ranks were due to him not gaining enough battle points, which in turn was due to him not participating in the ranking wars as much as the other top rankers placed above him.

Eren filled the gap left by quantity with quality. He was managing so many things at once so it was only natural he couldn't initiate as many ranking wars as he wanted to.

Eren didn't ignore his potion-making practice either during these weeks. Or more like, he couldn't. That's because he was now injecting many of his products into the market, thanks to Agatha and Jack's joint efforts.

Eren had bought two time-element spells at exaggerated prices from Levine de Montmorency that acted as the support-type spells for his potion-making. Ingredient Age Expedite allowed him to expedite the age of the ingredients, allowing him to get the ingredient at the right state for better potion quality.

Ingredient Age Reverse did the opposite of Ingredient Age Expedite. But it had its limitations, as indicated by its two-star status. Still, these two support-type spells helped Eren a lot in his late-night potion-making sessions, enabling him to dish out more and better potions and other potion-related items.

Eren had also bought a movement type time element spell that made his entire body get attuned to the effects of diluted time, not just his mind. Now when he executed Sedated Perception and Stunning Speed together, he didn't feel like he was immersed in the body of water.

The sheer movement resistance his body had to fight with while he was executing Sedated Perception had now turned into a mild inconvenience when it combined the effects of two time-element spells.

Of course, the gem had also passively helped the butcher in adopting the three new time element spells together in a short time to their perfection. But he didn't gain any insights into these spells, contrary to his expectations that stemmed from his experience with learning Sedated Perception. Eren figured out that the gem's slumber might have something to do with it.

Apart from the three time-element spells, Eren had also added three fire element spells in his arsenal. His lightning element affinity granted him a bit of an edge when it came to using fire element spells.

Eren had to learn the fire-element spells because he had faced the ineffectiveness of his lightning-element spells against some of his opponents with certain elemental affinities. The most bothersome opponents for him were those with earth element affinity.

Eren's lightning element spells would always fail to damage the earth element opponents the way he desired. He would use fire-element spells against such opponents to mitigate his disadvantage.

Of course, Eren's fire-element spell executions weren't as potent as his lightning element ones. They consumed more mana and produced average results. But that didn't stop the butcher from adding extra cards to play in his deck.

Eren had to learn the fire element spells the old school way, through practice and burnt skin. He used his ranking wars as means to test his new spells, making him unpredictable sometimes.

Eren's opponents couldn't even begin to guess what this wretched close combat expert was going to do in his battles. He would use his opponents to perform R&D on them, making them go all out in their

rage. That would bring the butcher to the brink of his defeat. Only then he would use his standard spells to turn the result of the match around.

Eren was now called a low-key masochist because of his performances in the ranking war. But he didn't care about his opponents or what was being talked about behind his back. Or more like he couldn't, since he had dipped his hands in one too many pies.

The 36,549 Merps Eren's status window was displaying wasn't the real projection of his accumulated wealth during this period. That was because his Merps balance was considerably reduced after buying two time-element spells from Levine and one time-element spell from LA's Novice Treasury along with three fire element spells.

Eren had risked offending the dual berserker earlier than his planned retaliation because of this very progress he had blessed himself with. He knew having more Merps was the key to expanding his battle powers as well as his potioneering skills in a short time.

Eren had many sleepless nights, extended training sessions, ranking battles with self-induced hardships, and various lectures to attend while juggling his apprenticeship duties. He had used every bit of advantage he could to make such progress in all his open fronts possible for him.

Furthermore, the effects of his hard work weren't limited to his status window alone. Eren's growth spurt had kicked in due to his enhanced training activities, making him a few inches taller.

Against his wishes, Eren's beard was soon going to make a comeback. And he felt that it was going to be fuller than before. He loathed grooming his facial hair, so this wasn't welcoming news for him amid the plenty of good ones.

Eren still boasted a lean build. But his musculature was now more prominent than before. His mana signature and his presence also radiated a sharp aura that he was now finding a little difficult to mask.

Eren looked completely different from his past self in the previous timeline. He was visually and otherwise on a different level than the sorry-ass-him he was before the time reset.

The butcher felt like he was now more in control of his future path, thanks to these obvious and not-so-obvious transformations.