

Vile 271

[Chapter 271 - Psychological Changes](#)

The butcher had a smile on his face when he saw his progress that had happened over just a few minutes:

Name- Eren Elijah Idril (Verified)

Organization- Lionhearts Adventurers' Academy

Academic Status- Class 1/C

Ranked Status:

Intra-class individual- 13th Place Holder

Intra-class team-based- 4th Place Holder

Inter-class individual- 21st Place Holder

Inter-class team-based- 12th Place Holder

Inter-year individual- 27th Place Holder

Inter-year team-based- 33rd Place Holder

Merit Points- 107,497

Base Stats:

HP- 7.4 / 7.4

MP- 5.9 / 5.9

STR- 4.8

AGI- 7.9

INT- 3.8

BTP~ 30

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: Fire Snake

Fire Element, Four-star, attack type: Fireball

Fire Element, Four-star, attack type: Firebreath

Transcendent Spells:

Non-elemental, miscellaneous: Beast Contract Spell (?)

Non-elemental, miscellaneous: ??? (?)

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 noted that his inherent spell was listed under the transcendent spell. The ID Stone had limited functionality after all. It wasn't designed to keep track of the kind of spells humans shouldn't have in the first place. A question mark was also attached to the beast contract spell since he was accustomed to casting the fake spell instead of the real deal.

BTP of 30 units. Eren had reached the bottleneck of the F-Rank. That too when he wasn't even done with the first year of his academic journey. Although it wasn't much when compared to other authentic

geniuses, it was mind-boggling for Eren who had used the progress of his previous timeline as a frame of reference.

Eren pondered over what triggered the rise in his ranking status. He could only guess that it was the combined effect of all his efforts so far, the use of his inherent spell, and mid-battle breakthrough.

"White Raven's first week wasn't very profitable. But it was also not a total disappointment either. You did good, Agatha."

Eren was on the top floor of the White Raven shop where Agatha was staying. He was reviewing the progress Agatha had made over the past few days.

The White Raven shop has been open for a week now. Eren had used Levine's channels and her contacts along with the ones offered by Jack Sullivan to streamline his first-ever official business endeavour in this timeline.

He had made full use of his status as Levine's disciple to start his business. He also got an official license from the kingdom that allowed him to produce and distribute F-Rank potions.

The business he did with Jack also grew along with his official one. He had already produced plenty of potion bombs and other controversial products that he couldn't officially sell in his shop. These products found their buyers in the underground community through Jack.

Agatha had been governing the whole process. She was a newbie at everything when she first started. But she quickly adapted to her role after consulting with Jack and learning the art of making more money from him.

"Um... thanks, boss. Are you also planning to carry out your plan to open a shop in the city of Laurel?"

Eren nodded before confirming what was asked to him:

"That's right. You'll leave within a few days and personally watch over the progress there. Here's some dough for the same."

Eren retrieved another load of Extols and gave it to Agatha along with a hefty amount of Eddies. The latter had stopped being surprised by the butcher's wealth long ago. What she didn't know was the fact that Eren's reserves had almost dried up after sending this instalment her way.

She quickly stored the money in her ID stone before asking something she had been meaning to do for so long now:

"Boss, you are not an anthrope, are you?"

Eren raised his eyebrows after hearing the question. He pondered for a few moments before answering:

"You can say that. Let's just say it's a different branch of being an anthrope. Why did you ask that though? Do you notice any difference?"

Agatha looked keenly at Eren. Then she closed her eyes and let her mana sense scan her master. She opened her eyes only after confirming what was on her mind:

My status as an anthrope and my opportunity to closely observe you over these past days have made me realize something significant. Even though it doesn't seem as though much has changed in you except for the upward trend in your rankings, I can sense that you are becoming unique.

Boss, I think you need to start looking over your shoulders. You are playing it cool now. And everything seems under your control. But troubles can come knocking on your doors if you grab any more attention than you already have."

Eren was surprised. Not because of the content of Agatha's warning. But over the fact that she was concerned about her master. Maybe she cared about him because she had her stakes in the equation. But that didn't make her care any less caring:

"Hmm. Don't worry. I'm waiting for a breakthrough into E-Rank. When that happens, I'll take up on-field assignments from LA and start staying away from all the prying eyes."

Eren said this and got closer to Agatha on a whim. He placed both his hands on either side of her waist, brought his mouth closer to her left ear, and whispered his words:

"Thanks for caring about me."

Eren said slowly before kissing the young anthrope on her left cheek. The latter was frozen the whole time. She didn't know what to do or how to act in the situation.

Agatha wasn't expecting the sudden turn of events. And in Eren's defence, neither did he. He merely felt that he should get closer to Agatha and acted on it.

'Some change has occurred within me. And it is not only physical but psychological as well.'

Eren quickly linked up his sudden behaviour with his non-human status. He had first thought that the change was only limited to his progressions in ranking status and enhanced body stat values. But it turned out that it had also changed some wires in his brain.

'Hmph! So what? I'll embrace the change if it can give me the power I need.'

Eren didn't shy away from adapting to the changes. He had suffered too much being weak in his previous life to care about such things. If having more power alters his psyche a bit, so be it.

Thinking this, Eren cupped Agatha's face with his hands and planted a kiss on her luscious lips. Agatha opened her eyes wide in surprise when that happened. She first tried to gently push her master away. But that didn't work out as the kiss progressed into Eren inserting his tongue into her mouth.

'I think this should be enough. It's one thing to embrace the changes, but quite another to allow those changes to control you.'

Eren ended his kiss after thinking about it. He withdrew from his position and allowed Agatha to catch her breath. He smiled and shook his head when he saw the girl was still in a zone of her own.

"I'll be going ahead, Agatha. Keep in touch."

Eren said this and left the White Raven shop. His previous timeline's experiences had tempered Eren's mind sufficiently enough not to get swept over by the changes brought out by his non-human status.

It held true for now at least.

[Chapter 272 - Purgatory Exploration Begins](#)

The day of purgatory exploration.

A woman was standing near a huge boulder that was in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by dense vegetation. She was wearing a hunter's outfit that was only a bit effective in undermining her hourglass figure.

She had been waiting for someone at the place for quite a while now. And that someone had just decided to show up, long after dawn had arrived.

"You like to make me wait, don't you?"

Jules greeted Ronny with a mild frown on her face. The latter smiled at her, got closer, and kissed her on her cheek before responding:

"I was busy getting some help, Jules. I hope you don't mind."

Ronny diverted Julie's attention to the three rankers following him. One of them was in E-Rank while the other two were novice rankers. They were Renar, Viper, and Belar.

"Hm? You didn't tell me..."

"Before you say anything, let me say that they are anthropes and excommunicated from the Beast Bloods."

Ronny made Jules aware of his followers' identities before she could register her complaints. His diversion worked because Julie stopped her speech. It was in her interest that more ex-members of Beast Bloods joined this exploration.

"Well, they'll have to sign the binding contracts. We can't just take random people in, you know."

Ronny shook his head before saying:

"No need, Jules. I've already done that. They are bound to me. And since I'm bound to the Illuminati, the same restrictions apply to them as well. Here, check them yourself."

Ronny showed Julie the binding contracts he had Renar and the rest signed for him. The illusionist was content when she looked at the binding rules.

"Alright, Ronny. Everything seems to be in order. Let's head out then."

Julie led Ronny and his group to a salt lake not far away from the boulder. She stopped in her tracks and gave her companions some instructions:

"Listen up, boys. The site I'm about to show you is extremely sensitive. So be on your toes after you get there. Leave your attitude and arrogance out in the open here. Because there will be higher ranked individuals there.

I don't know about you, but I value my life. And people who show a bit of prudence when they are in the presence of high-ranked entities tend to live longer."

"Where are we going exactly, miss?"

Renar spoke after surveying his surroundings. He couldn't see any route that would indicate there was going to be a sudden change of venue.

Julie pointed her finger at the small salt lake that was beside her where she was standing before declaring further:

"We have to dive into this lake. Follow me and you'll find out."

Jules said this and coated her entire body in her mana layer before diving into the lake. Renar looked at his group's leader who just shrugged his shoulders and did the same thing Julie did before diving right in:

The group swam to the bottle on the lake and travelled through an underwater passage before coming out of the water from the other end of it.

The lake's bottom was dark, chilly, and gloomy. But the passage opened up to a huge underground cavern above the water level that had numerous yooperlite stones studded over its walls.

The yooperlite stones exuded enough luminance to offer clear visibility in the underground cavern. The group followed Jules as she started walking deeper into the cavern.

There were some security precautions in place in the form of array traps and the like. But Jules took care of them without triggering them with the token given to her. The token had pyramid insignia etched over it, indicating the security measures were put in place by the Illuminati.

They traversed deep inside the underground cavern after many twists and turns. They soon reached an open space that was almost 100 meters wide and twice as long. There was an insanely cryptic array drawn on the ground. And someone was waiting for them right outside the array.

"Lady Zee, I'm here to report along with Ronny."

Julie greeted what looked to be a feisty and mature woman in her 40s who had a scar on her left cheek. It was Lady Zee who had previously contacted Jules about Ronny.

Lady didn't reply with words but narrowed her eyes on Ronny and the anthropes following him. Jules explained things to her and introduced her to the group:

"Ronny, this is Lady Zee. She'll be in charge of our group in the purgatory exploration."

Lady Zee smiled mischievously at Ronny before replying:

"Young man, you sure impressed me with your... let's say "endurance" the other day.

Too bad there was nobody who could handle your vigour for more than a few sessions. Hehe! You let me know if you want to get cosy with someone who can."

'This old-ass bitch is openly hitting on my man.'

It took a while for Jules to understand what lady Zee was talking about. She couldn't help but get a bit angry at her as a result. She looked at Ronny who had confusion written all over his face and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Don't think too much, Ronny. Lady Zee likes to joke around sometimes.

Lady Zee, what do we need to do right now?"

Lady Zee could feel that Julie's mood had turned a bit foul because of her teasing. But that didn't discourage her from eyeing Ronny one more time like he was some tempting side dish she needed to test.

But the Adept ranker in her soon regained the composure she needed to guide her team. She addressed the same in a serious tone:

"Guys, we are going to enter an unknown ranker's purgatory. The others have already gone ahead and are waiting for us there. The spatial entrance is a tad unstable. So make sure you stick close to each other and brace yourself for the spatial turbulence."

Lady Zee warned Ronny and his team before they stepped into the purgatory.

[Chapter 273 - Known Faces](#)

"Guys, we are going to enter an unknown ranker's purgatory. The others have already gone ahead and are waiting for us there. The spatial entrance is a tad unstable. So make sure you stick close to each other and brace yourself for the spatial turbulence."

Lady completed her speech and retrieved loads of Extols before throwing them towards a few distinct sections of the array. She then closed her eyes, spread her mana sense, and concentrated.

The cryptic array was lit up as it got activated, tearing the spatial fabric right above its array eye. The spatial tear soon grew in size until it was around 10 meters in radius.

The entrance to the ranker's purgatory had been opened in front of Ronny and his group's eyes.

"Let's go."

Lady Zee walked toward the spatial tear and then disappeared into it. Others were left to follow her lead.

As soon as Ronny entered the spatial tear, he felt like his body was getting stretched in all directions. But that feeling only lasted a moment. In the next moment though he felt like he had found himself under the same boulder that Jules was standing beside on the surface.

Ronny soon saw a change of scenery as he found himself right in the middle of snowy land. Cold seeped into his skin as it made its way towards the bones. Ronny quickly strengthened the protective mana layer surrounding him while retrieving winter gear from his storage.

In hindsight, Ronny AKA Eren had it pretty easy travelling through the spatial tear. Because he saw Renar and the two novices lying flat on the snowy ground as soon as they made it through. Jules also didn't

have it easy. She felt like puking but willed herself to stand up straight after lightly slapping herself. It took them a while to get used to their new environment.

Only Lady Zee was unaffected by anything, thanks to her D-Rank status.

Jules had already warned them about the environment. So they all retrieved the winter gear after stabilizing themselves. Eren tried to see what was in front of him. But all he could see was some spruce in the distance that had been covered by the seemingly never-ending snow.

He could also see four tower-like shadows in four directions from where he was standing. But it wasn't clear to him what those were. He tried asking Lady Zee about it but she beat him to it:

"Everything will become clear once we meet the others. Follow me."

Lady Zee chose a particular direction after confirming her position. She led the team to a gathering of rankers that had taken place at a distance.

Ronny could see a medium-sized group of people gathered around a particularly large spruce tree. A man in his 30s wearing a hunter's outfit was standing on a stone platform that allowed him to have an elevated view from the rankers gathering around him. He imbued mana in his voice and spoke up as soon as he saw Lady Zee's group joining the gathering of rankers.

"With Lady Zee's group finally joining us, our exploration team for the purgatory this time is now complete. I know most of you are ex-members of the Beast Bloods we have chosen for this exploration. There's a reason for this which you'll come to know later on.

The Illuminati doesn't mind keeping any resource you've gained in purgatory through your efforts. We only ask that you let your findings be known to us and share the resource with us if and when it is too big for one person to keep it.

I'm sure you must have read your binding contracts so this is just a fair warning. Don't try to deceive us and we won't have to take extreme measures. Simple as that. Any questions before I proceed with the plan?"

A young voice raised its question as soon as the man on the platform finished speaking:

"Can we travel solo to explore the purgatory?"

Eren in Ronny's avatar recognized that voice as he looked in its direction. He saw some familiar figures as he located the source of that voice.

The voice belonged to Ivor. He was also accompanied by Jason and Veronica. But those were not the only people Ronny could recognize. Jaime's party was also standing beside the group of students.

Ronny covered his surprise by looking down when he saw Jaime, Linda, Ronald, and Verna were among the members of the exploration team. It made one thing clear to him when he remembered the first time he had seen them in the Osan Woods:

'The man behind them is connected to the Illuminati.'

Eren quickly thought of one person who could make use of his connections with the cultists this way while staying low-key. Jason's father. Only he had the pull it needed to arrange something like this.

'But what are these guys doing here?'

Eren thought to himself as he straightened his back and assumed his stoic face once again. He heard the man on the platform responding to Ivor's query after some time:

"Being youthful sure is fun. Hehe. Brat, if you think you can travel solo in a purgatory world, be my guest. I won't stop you.

There are some encounters in the purgatory which are only beneficial for solo exploration after all. But don't come crying to us when you are frightened by the horrors of this place that await you after you begin your exploration.

This might be the first exploration of this kind in your life. So let me warn you. Don't underestimate this place. The Illuminati have lost quite a few members in this place who were considered exceptional before their death.

All your achievements are of no use to you when you are dead."

Others might think Ivor spoke out of arrogance. But the man on the raised platform thought otherwise.

He had meant it when he said he would allow him to explore purgatory alone. That was because there were tests in purgatory intended to be taken by individual rankers. They just contained more risks.

[Chapter 274 - Underground Dungeon](#)

"What is this place?"

Ronny couldn't help blurt out his surprise when he saw one of the four distant towers up close. The exploration team had been split into five groups after the man on the stone platform finished his speech.

According to him, this separate dimension had four towers located in four different directions. There was also an underground dungeon right in the middle, allowing for a team-based entry.

The four towers were intended to test an individual's ranking power. The southern tower was meant for F-Rank Novices, the west tower was meant for Aces, the east tower was meant for Adepts, and the north tower was meant for C-Rank Experts.

The underground dungeon, just like the four towers, was supposed to have 7 floors, arranged in descending order. The difficulty will increase as you proceed further from floor zero.

The underground dungeon had a very large cave-like entrance. The cave was almost 500 meters wide and the ceiling stood at least half that length from the ground.

Ronny and his team were brought in first to try their luck in a group battle, whereas the high-ranked entities and rankers like Ivor who wanted to complete the individual tests headed to the towers depending on their ranking.

"This is what we call floor zero, Ronny. Here's where we'll qualify to enter the dungeon. Just follow Lady Zee's lead."

Jules provided a brief explanation to Ronny when she heard her question. She was walking beside him whereas Renar, Viper, and Belar were following him. Lady Zee was walking in the front, leading their squad. There were a bunch of squads like them in the group, led by Adept ranker each.

Soon the entire dungeon exploration group found itself standing in the middle of a large array. The array lit up as soon as the last person in the group stepped into it.

"Just relax and let the array scan and rate you. I'll tell you what this is about in a minute."

Lady Zee addressed her squad as soon as the array lit up. Ronny followed her advice and stood still. He felt that an artificial mana sense was scanning him. Artificial because he didn't feel like the mana sense belonged to a living being. He guessed that the array had a built-in mana sense embedded into it, which enabled it to scan and rate the dungeon participants.

Ronny felt that the artificial mana sense seeped into his flesh and bones before heading towards his mana core, observing and confirming every last bit of information it could gain from him. Soon after, he felt that something had been written over his right hand's palm.

99/100

This was Ronny AKA Eren's rating as soon as the artificial mana sense finished scanning him. He closed his palm and looked around to understand the meaning of his rating by comparing it with the rest of the participants.

'The score dipped again. It's 55/100 now, just 5 points away from the cut-off. I'm afraid this year will be my last purgatory exploration.'

Lady sighed internally as she saw her personal score. This was not her first purgatory exploration. But every time she returned, her personal rating would plummet even when she had progressed further into her ranking status.

Arthur had already told the Illuminati that purgatory wouldn't entertain repeat participants forever. The personal score of 50 was the cut off a ranker needed to proceed further in the underground dungeon as well as towers meant for individual exploration.

One's ranking status wasn't the only criteria behind the rating. Scholars at Arthur's disposal as well as those within the Illuminati concluded that rankers' previous purgatory exploration attempts, their age, and constitutions were also taken into account. This allowed for a more balanced rating. Lady Zee explained this to her squad before demanding to know about the members' individual scores:

"Alright, tell me your individual scores."

So everyone obliged. Renar scored 82, Viper 85, and Belar's score was 81. Jules on the other hand only scored 71. The pathological liar in Ronny just replied he got 87 when he was asked about it. The rating had faded anyway, replaced by a circle with sections inside it. So he didn't have to hide his palm before lying.

"Hm? Jules, is this not your first time exploring purgatory? Why is your score so low despite your talent?"

Ronny asked Jules when he heard about her score. He could tell from the scores of Renar and the rest that Jules had been rated low. Lady Zee smiled mirthlessly before replying:

"That's why it is said that purgatory is partial towards the anthropes. When talent is the same, anthropes are rated higher than normal people on individual ratings.

We have explored purgatory with anthropes before, you know. But this is certainly our first with so many of you exploring the place at the same time."

Lady Zee explained to Ronny before Jules could. The next year, she was considering undergoing the anthropo transformation to make it to the cut off and explore purgatory once more.

Ronny's eyes had a strange light in them as soon as this detail was made available to him. He had scored 99/100 in his personal rating. Thus, he was the one most qualified to explore this dungeon out of everyone present in the purgatory exploration team. Even the high-ranked weren't exceptions.

"What happens next?"

Renar asked as soon as the squad's individual rating was declared. Lady Zee just pointed her finger at her front as a response to his question, causing everyone to turn their attention in that direction.

Various small spectral doorways had been raised from the ground after the individual ratings were assigned to each participant. The spectral portals almost became solid soon after their emergence.

It was time to enter the underground dungeon!

[Chapter 275 - Bigger The Risks Better The Rewards](#)

Various small spectral doorways had been raised from the ground after the individual ratings were assigned. The spectral portals almost became solid soon after their emergence.

"The doorways allow for teams to enter the dungeon together. The teams would be taken to the first floor. Even though I say the first floor, every team will be assigned a separate dimension to battle. And the teams will remain separated from each other throughout their progress further into the dungeon.

We can choose any doorway. They won't matter no matter how near or far they are from the squads. Nor would the number of members in the squad affect the difficulty level of the test it receives. What counts is the average score of the squad that enters the dungeon."

Ronny raised his eyebrows when he heard the explanation. He couldn't help but ask Lady Zee about the question that had just been popped into his head:

"Lady Zee, you mean to say the high scores and the low scores would get evened out in a group battle? How would that affect the rewards considering the average score of the squad would influence the difficulty level it has to face?"

Lady Zee clapped her hands in appreciation when she heard Ronny's question. She responded quickly after:

"Not just the brawn but the brain as well. Colour me impressed, boy. That's right. Since the average score of the squad affects the difficulty level, it also affects the kind of rewards we get. But don't think too much about it. What we are doing now is playing it safe, having the advantages of both worlds.

The difficulty level increases exponentially as the squad approaches a higher average score. So having a balanced average score is not a terrible thing. The Illuminati had squad wipeouts in the dungeon when it had decided to group all the high-scorers."

Understanding dawned on Ronny and his team when they heard Lady Zee's explanation. They also understood that dungeon participation was the safest form of exploration in the purgatory if the average score was balanced out. Because the tower exploration would only consider individual scores for the level of difficulty offered to the ranker.

"Bigger the risks, better the rewards."

Ronny exclaimed after the wheels in his head started churning and he realized what the scene entailed. Lady Zee nodded before responding:

"That's right. That's why most of the first-time participants were brought here first for group participation before trying their luck in the towers of their ranking status.

Here, the idiots will be humbled and the geniuses will be made aware of the dangers they'd have to face if and when they decided to go solo. That's it for the explanation. Let's proceed to the first floor of the dungeon. You'll come to know the difficulty level of this unnamed purgatory eventually."

Lady Zee declared before choosing a door to enter. The group followed her lead and soon disappeared into the black void serving as its passageway.

A spectral shadow appeared over the array eye when everyone entered their respective doorways. It narrowed its attention to the direction Ronny and his squad mates had chosen to before mumbling to itself:

'Someone worthy has finally arrived.'

"I'll take care of the big guy there. You guys handle the rest as per your ranking status. Julie and Ronny, you guys take care of the two E-Rank hobgoblins. Renar, Viper, and Belar stick close to each other and get rid of the five F-Rank goblins one at a time."

When Lady Zee saw the squad's opponents, she chose the most straightforward battle strategy. She was expecting a swarm of E-Rank monsters instead of facing the D-Rank Goblin Lord. But the purgatory always had a way of surprising the participants when they least expected it. So she wasn't completely taken aback.

'I'll have to make some effort now.'

Lady Zee thought to herself before bolting towards the Goblin Lord. She had already made her squad aware that the monsters they were fighting with weren't real but spectral apparitions that had minds of their own, just like the real deal. Their bodies would replicate the damage the rankers inflicted on them.

And the spectral apparitions would disappear into thin air if and when enough damage is accumulated on them.

After receiving his instructions, Ronny began heading to his battlefield. The hobgoblin soon returned the hostility it received from him and cackled before approaching him.

Ronny took out a pair of daggers from his storage just when he was a few meters away from him. His mock battle with Renar had made him realize something when it took place before the dungeon exploration. That he was lacking the E-Rank spells when he was portraying himself as Ronny.

So he had prioritized re-learning all the E-Rank variants of all the fire and lightning element spells he had. He had to use his underground channels with Jake and Agatha's help as he couldn't ask them from LA for obvious reasons. As a result, he could only get his hands on all the two-star variants. But that was enough for him to carry out his act.

Incidentally, Ronny didn't upgrade the time-element spells despite finding the two-star, E-Rank variant of the Sedated Perception. The miser in him thought that the price asked by the seller was too high for him to even consider buying something he was only going to use temporarily. It would be better for him to buy three-star variants or higher once he reaches E-Rank.

'Sedated Perception.

Stunning Speed.

Blitz Steps.

Blitz Bolt.'

Ronny decided to start with a bang. Since he was basically an E-Ranker now with the previous experience of actually being one, he could now cast four spells at once. He still had an easy time with his mana circuits because two out of four spells he cast simultaneously were of F-Rank.

Ronny became a lightning blur because of the spell combo he had decided to work with. In the next moment, he was standing behind his hobgoblin opponent.. The latter had a bunch of illuminated cuts on his body that became visible after some time.

[Chapter 276 - Ronny Vs. Hobgoblins P1](#)

Ronny became a lightning blur because of the spell combo he had decided to use. In the next moment, he was standing behind his hobgoblin opponent. The latter had a bunch of illuminated cuts on his body that became visible after some time.

"Rarararara."

The hobgoblin apparition made a series of weird sounds after it was inflicted with wounds on its body. It turned back to tackle its attacker. But by then, only Ronny's afterimage had remained there.

But the hobgoblin wasn't to be underestimated. As soon as he realized his opponent was too fast for him to handle, he released a domain attack to counter the speed. A bunch of thick, strong green vines sprouted from the ground and covered the area around the goblin.

He was just about to press on when the vines obstructed his progress. They started grabbing at his feet, climbing upwards to prevent him from moving completely.

Ronny had to divert his attention to the vines that were gripping him. He cut the vines with his daggers that had Blitz Bolt running through them. But there seemed to be no end to the production of the vines. As soon as he cut one, two more would pop up. So he ended the time-element spell and concentrated on the Blitz Bolt and Blitz Steps.

As Ronny was busy dealing with the vines, the hobgoblin approached him from his left side and attacked his axe. The axe's swing was so forceful that it generated a gust of wind, letting Ronny know the incoming danger just a brief moment before it happened.

Ronny understood the lightning element spells wouldn't be much effective against his opponent. So he shifted to fire-element spells.

'Fire snake.

Breath of fire.'

Ronny cast two of his fire-element spells at the same time while changing his position a bit to tackle the incoming attack. A complete dodge wasn't possible. So he chose to deflect the attack by diverting its force to the side. The stacked fire snake spell countered the vines that looked like green pythons themselves.

The breath of fire was a diversion. Ronny directed that attack on the hobgoblin's face while diverting the axe's force to his side using both his daggers in a defensive X formation. Sparks flew when the weapons came in contact with each other.

The hobgoblin couldn't redirect the force of his weapon because his face was blasted off with the burst of fire originating from Ronny's breath. Now that the axe's attack was diverted to the side, Ronny withdrew his right dagger from the defensive formation, spun around while swinging the hand for extra momentum, and tried lodging the weapon right below the hobgoblin's rib cage that was an inch taller than him.

But the hobgoblin seemed ready for Ronny's surprise attack. That is because the domain attack of vines came to his rescue and wrapped his torso up, preventing him from facing a serious injury to his vital place.

'The fuck kinda realism is this? And the most wretched kind of elemental matchup right off the bat at that.'

Ronny cursed the difficulty level of the first floor. He created a distance from his opponent using Blitz Bolt and observed his surroundings. I wanted to see how his teammates were doing since he was struggling so much.

Lady Zee had retrieved a spear from her storage space and was handling her opponent pretty well. She was a black-fire element user. With her element, she had created a trail of black flames around her battlefield with her weapon attacks. But it didn't look like she'd be able to wrap her battle anytime soon.

Jules had incorporated ice-elemental attacks with her illusion spells. She would create ice statues of herself that created the illusion of her being everywhere at once. She also mixed illusions with her rapier attacks, trying to catch her opponent by surprise. And so far it was working. But she was still miles away from getting rid of her opponent for good.

Renar, Belar, and Viper had stuck together like they had been told. In response, their opponent formed a united front against them. Ronny could use them as meat shields to gain some time for a heavy counterattack against his opponent. But he couldn't underestimate the force of the five monsters they were battling with just because they were in F-Rank. In the worst case, they could come in between him and his opponent, wasting his counterattack opportunity.

'Damn it. It seems I'll have to take care of this thing on my own.'

Ronny wanted to draw his go-to weapons Dicerus Left and Right. But he was trying to maintain his identity. Although lightning element spells were not common, they were not eye-catching either. Weapons like Dicerus Left and Right, however, were easily identifiable. Especially when he knew the exploration team contained people from LA.

Ronny gripped his daggers hard as he made his way through a series of vines heading for him. He cut through his obstructions and headed straight for his opponent once again.

"Rarararara."

The hobgoblin drummed his chest with both his hands before wielding his heavy weapon on his shoulder as he saw Ronny approaching him. He raised his left hand in the lightning-fire element user's direction and another couple of branches of vines shot towards Ronny from almost all directions.

'Sedated Perception.

Stunning Speed.

Blitz Bolt.'

Despite the vine attack, only Ronny's afterimage was caught as he made it past the hurdles. Just when he was a few meters away from the pumped-up hobgoblin, he executed his AoE while still maintaining his earlier combo.

Ronny didn't want to use AoEs this early in the game. Because he had guessed that the hobgoblin he was fighting right now might not be the only opponent he had to fight. But conserving his mana was also not a wise choice in his case after he saw the tenacity of the monster he was dealing with.

Lightning tongues were let loose right in the middle of the vine domain as they produced a distinct chirping sound. The effect this time was much more impactful than Eren's F-Rank spell execution as the AoE had been upped in the next rank.

'Blitz Storm.'

[Chapter 277 - Ronny Vs. Hobgoblins P2](#)

'Blitz Storm.'

A violent flash of lightning tore through the vines as Ronny kept on approaching his opponent. His speed had been decreased due to AoE requiring time to destroy the vines approaching him. But he had stopped running around. He ran straight in the hobgoblin's direction with his daggers gripped tightly in his hand.

"Rarara"

The hobgoblin swung his heavy weapon towards Ronny as soon as he came in its range. But the tongues of lightning made contact with the weapon first and ran through it. The tingling sensation the monster must have felt was enough for him to lose the force behind his attack sharply.

The hobgoblin's entire body then came into contact with Ronny's AoE. He dodged under the trajectory of the swung weapon and came only a few inches away from him. Ronny threw his right dagger in the air and used his now-free hand to grip the wrist of the monster that he had used to swing his weapon with.

'Blitz Bolt.'

Ronny executed his offensive spell while he was in close combat with his opponent. That direct contact allowed the E-Rank spell to inflict maximum damage to the target. As a result, the hobgoblin lost his grip on his weapon.

Thud!

The weapon created a thud sound as it was dropped on the ground. Ronny cast the time-element spell as soon as he realized his opponent was weaponless.

'Sedated perception.

Stunning Speed.'

With the time element spell, he enhanced his perception, doing away with discarding the AoE and switching to the personal offensive. He missed wielding the punching daggers at this moment. But in the next moment, he tightened his grip around his daggers and started hacking through his opponent.

"Rarararara!"

The hobgoblin whined in pain as Ronny started giving him dagger wounds all over his body without any rest. With his vines, he tried to limit Ronny's movements, but Ronny would use every tool at his disposal to inflict more wounds while avoiding the vines.

So the hobgoblin gave up on restricting Ronny and concentrated on covering his body with the protection of his vines. He secured his limbs and torso with the vines and lifted his weapon again. By now, Ronny had inflicted a considerable amount of damage to the hobgoblin's body. It was the vine armour that held the monster together.

A long-drawn battle ensued, depleting Ronny's mana reserve at a massive rate. But he persisted by making efficient use of all the tricks up his sleeve.

"Rararara!"

The monster finally let out his dying shrills as Ronny delivered the last blow to his head. He had plunged his daggers into both of the monster's long ears, piercing the eardrums before twisting them hard. As a result, the brain matter was drawn out from both the ear wounds as the monster's eyes bulged post mortem.

'Sururururu.'

The monster's lifelike apparition disintegrated into a thousand light particles after Ronny confirmed his kill. He let out a sigh of relief when he found out he had one less opponent to worry about.

"Ronny, don't dilly dally. Help Jules up quickly."

Lady Zee's voice was heard just when Ronny thought he could continue with his breather. He sighed internally before looking in the illusionist's direction.

Julie had carried herself very well. She had inflicted enough damage on her enemy while ensuring her safety. But unlike Ronny who prioritized speed, the illusionist prioritized stability in her battle style.

So she couldn't land a finishing blow to the monster. As a result of which, the monster would use healing spells once in a while on himself, turning some portion of Julie's efforts into a big fat zero.

"Jules, support me."

Ronny announced his intentions as soon as he joined another battlefield. The latter looked at him and couldn't help but marvel how fast he had taken care of his opponent before coming for her aid.

Jules snapped her fingers and two more Ronny-like mirages appeared by his side. The mirages were created by the light reflection performed by the surface of clear ice sculptures. One would have to look hard and use their mana sense constantly and minutely to differentiate between the fake and real deal.

The illusion also had a way to interfere with the ranker's mana sense. Due to this delay between identifying the mirages and the real self, the attack worked as a way to confuse your opponent. Ronny understood what he should do as soon as his mirages appeared on either side of him.

Jules was battling a hobgoblin with wind element spells at his disposal.

He would create compressed air bombs on top of his palm before hurling them towards his opponents. The compressed air bombs had a radius of around 20 centimetres. And they also had wind spikes all over them.

The spikes would shoot like projectiles when the air bombs were made to go off under the monster's influence. Spikes like these acted like wind bullets. The difference was in the area of impact they covered. Since the wind spikes were larger, blunter in size than the wind bullets, they would penetrate less but inflict more surface-level damage.

Ronny couldn't use his time-element spells if he wanted to use the mirages as decoys. They couldn't keep up with his increased speed after all. So he decided to experiment with another combo.

'Blitz Shield.

Blitz Bolt.

Blitz Steps.'

A layer of lightning armour appeared over Ronny's body as he cast his defensive spell. Unlike the undefined layer of F-Rank, the defensive spell of E-Rank had reshaped the layer into a spectral armour that fit Ronny perfectly. The mirages that ran with Ronny also had the same level of armour detail worn by them as soon as the original finished making changes.

The wind-element hobgoblin saw three new rankers joining the battle. It seemed to have known that the two out of three entities that were approaching him were the mirages his earlier opponent used to confuse him.

"Rararararara."

The wind-element monster increased the number of air bombs he could send flying around him.. He hurled some of them at his three opponents as they levitated all around him.

[Chapter 278 - No Crying Over Spilt Milk](#)

x

"Rararararara."

The wind-element monster increased the number of air bombs he could send flying around him. He hurled some of them towards his three enemies as they levitated around him.

Swoooosshhh.

Phewwwwwwwwwweeeee.

Some of the air bombs detonated around the three enemies that were approaching the monster. As a result of the detonation, the wind spikes on the bombs accelerated. They shot through the air while creating a distinct whistling sound.

Patooh!

The wind spikes landed on the real Ronny's body that was protected by his defensive spell and registered an impact. The spikes weren't enough to break through his defensive spell. But they certainly obstructed his forward momentum by pushing him back and throwing him off balance.

The two mirages shared Ronny's condition. But they would be fine as long as the real ranker kept on standing. It was thanks to them that the monster couldn't focus on the real Ronny entirely.

With his defensive spell still active, Ronny shortened the distance between him and the wind-element hobgoblin at a consistent pace. He made full use of the mirages maintained by Jules from afar and mingled with them to throw the hobgoblin into a state of confusion.

'Sedated Perception.

Stunning Speed.

Blitz Steps.

Blitz Bolt.

Blitz Shield.'

Ronny decided to go all-in for his last attack when he found out he was at an optimal distance from his enemy. He used the mirages as a decoy. He wouldn't hesitate to fight all out if someone came within striking distance, whether they were mirages or the real thing.

Swisssssh.

"Rarararara!"

The hobgoblin cried in pain as he received his first personal injury from Ronny. Unlike the rapier wounds Jules made, which were quick but shallow wounds, the dagger wounds were precise and prominent.

"Blitz Bolt!"

Ronny shouted the name of his attack to increase its potency as he tapped onto the hobgoblin's shoulder with his palm. The palm contact was the one he had used to run Blitz Bolt through his enemy. Then he gripped the same shoulder and used his hand as a support to lift his legs in the air.

Ronny stood upside down on the hobgoblin's shoulder with his hand exerting the body weight. He had done this to avoid coming in contact with the monster's air bombs he had detonated in his previous position.

Ronny spun around using his hand as the lever and got off behind the monster. He changed his spell combo once he found himself at the desired position.

'Blitz Bolt.

Blitz Storm.

Fire snake.

Fireball.'

An all-out offensive. Ronny cancelled his defensive spell when he found out he'd be out of the win spikes' danger for a while. He stacked the Blitz Bolt and Fire snake multiple times for maximum impact.

The stacked fire snake spell created multiple fire snakes that climbed the monster's limbs before restricting his movements. They also created a distinct sizzling sound, as if raw meat was being cooked by coming in contact with the fire.

The stacked Blitz Bolt was run through Ronny's daggers to increase their damage output. With the desired position in his favour, Ronny made full use of the spells he had cast and made quick work out of his opponent's back.

"Rarararara."

The hobgoblin's voice contained a mixed range of emotions. But pain and anger could be identified as the most prevalent among them. He spun hard while carrying two more air bombs in both his hands. But by that time, Ronny had left his previous position and created a safe distance from his opponent.

"Raaaaaaa"

The monster wasn't willing to call it quits this easily. He summoned all the air bombs around him, bolstering his defence to prevent Ronny from using the same move again. The move also decreased his firepower. But it was a trade-off he was willing to endure for a while.

Snap!

The monster snapped his finger and a visible white gale was wrapped around him like a shawl. Julie's panicked voice was heard from behind before Ronny could figure out what the monster was doing:

"Ronny, the monster is using the healing spell to heal himself. Hurry up and interrupt before he finishes patching himself up."

'This shitty purgatory is trying to kill us for real. And Jules, you are a moment too late to give me a heads-up. Say something like this beforehand, damn it.'

Ronny had only briefly looked at the fight between Jules and the wind-element hobgoblin. He wasn't aware that the monster could use the healing spell so effectively. Only now did he understand why the illusionist had a hard time with this seemingly insurmountable obstacle.

But there was no use crying over spilt milk. Ronny kept his complaints to himself as he retrieved a random sword from his storage and threw it in the monster's direction after charging it with the Blitz Bolt. The monster was expecting an attempt of interruption anyway.

He just raised his hand and swung it like swatting a fly in the weapon's direction. A gust of wind was created after the monster's action, causing the weapon to travel only an inch away from his cheek.

But the result was what Ronny dreaded and the monster laughed at. The hobgoblin's serious injuries turned into minor ones, whereas the minor injuries disappeared completely. The efforts Ronny had taken to injure the monster had been rendered in vain because of the monster's strategic use of healing and defensive spells.

"Rarararara."

The hobgoblin that had just recovered from most of his injuries cried in victory and provocation when he finished his healing spell. He drummed his chest and looked at Ronny with a cunning smile on his face.

'Look at this guy, acting all smug. I wanted to preserve them for later use. But what the hell. I'll have to show this green ass that he is not the only one with bombs at his disposal.'

The monster's smug reaction pissed Ronny for some reason. He retrieved from his storage what he was used to selling on the black market these days.

The terrorist was going to use potion bombs once again!

[Chapter 279 - Lady Zee Vs. Rock Goblin Lord](#)

The terrorist was planning to use potion bombs again.

Ronny had prepared stalks of various items for this exploration. The batch of potion bombs was among them. Although he could only make the potion bombs in the F-Ranks, their sheer quantity was enough to make for the difference in ranks.

Ronny returned the monster's smug look with a smirk of his own before hurling the potion bombs in his direction. He retreated in the opposite direction as the bombs made their way forward.

The monster didn't recognize the danger level of the bunch of vials heading towards him at first. It's only when the potions inside the vials started releasing luminescence and unstable mana pulses did he realize that his wretched opponent had implemented the same strategy as him.

The wind-element hobgoblin tried to intercept the vials coming for him with air bombs of his own. But by then, the vials had covered a sufficient distance. They detonated as soon as the air bombs collided with them.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Several bombs detonated one after the other. The air bombs worked against the hobgoblin as they empowered the potion bombs' detonation powers even further. The monster tried to cast the defensive wind-element spell around him.

But the force generated by the continuous detonation plus the air bombs was so strong that it pushed the monster's body backwards at a rapid pace. It prevented him from successfully executing his defensive spell.

"Raaaaaaaaaaaaa."

The monster wailed in agony as he lost his left arm that he had used to defend against the detonation. His right leg was no more below his knee as well.

The monster tried casting his healing spell again. But he soon found out that Ronny had followed him to his current position.

'You luck ends here, bitch!'

Ronny didn't let the hobgoblin cast another healing spell. He used his daggers and targeted the monster's open wounds. He used various combo spells to further his advantage.

"Raaaaaaaaaaah."

Another monster soon disintegrated into a bunch of light particles. Ronny let out a long gasp and sat on the stone floor once he confirmed that his second opponent was no more.

'I'm not doing shit anytime soon.'

Ronny saw that Renar, Viper, and Belar had only taken care of two out of three of their opponents during this time. But he didn't rush to their help. He just looked at Jules who understood his message and nodded at him before heading towards the trio.

With Julie's help, the trio soon triumphs over their three opponents. Julie led them towards where Ronny was sitting before running into a hug:

"You were awesome, Ronny. Are you alright? And where did you get those vile vials?"

Ronny patted Julie's back while maintaining his seated position awkwardly before responding:

"I'm alright, Jules. I'll tell you about the vials later. Let's focus on Lady Zee's battle first."

Ronny made Jules realize that there was still someone among them who was still fighting. She let go of Ronny, sat beside him, and focused her gaze in Lady Zee's direction.

A mini pond of black flames had been created around Lady Zee's battlefield. She didn't look exhausted but her face told the spectators that she wasn't completely at ease either.

Lady Zee's opponent was a Goblin Lord, a monster of the same rank as her. He was a rock element user. That's how he was able to defend himself against Lady Zee's persistent elemental attacks.

He would raise rock walls around himself whenever Lady Zee would try to enter close combat with him. In the dungeon, the monster adopted a dungeon-style battle style, trying to attack Lady Zee from the blindside.

Lady Zee's black flames were destructive in nature. Instead of burning, the black flames would make the things they incinerate implode from within. With her black flames, she had imploded many of the walls raised by the monster. The debris of those walls would again explode into a million pieces as Lady Zee continued to pour more black flames.

"Burn and blast off for me, you rock bastard!"

Lady Zee finally had it. She clapped her hand and cast her AoE. This created a parabolic domain of black flames around herself that expanded and covered the opponent she was battling with it as well.

When the black flames engulfed the monster, he could do nothing but hide behind his walls. He understood creating the walls around himself would be futile so he summoned the rocks around himself and created a dome-type shell around himself.

"Rararararaaaaaa"

The monster cried from within the shell. Although he had secured himself from falling into the sea of black flames with his defensive spell, some of the black flames had already landed on his body. They made the monster's limbs implode, rupturing the skin they were incinerating.

Just when he thought the nightmare was over, the monster sensed that someone was trying to break his defensive spell. Lady Zee had climbed over the 9 feet shell. She was using her ranked artefact in combination with her destructive black flames to create a hole inside the shell while her domain was active.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Lady Zee shouted as she plunged her spear coated in dense black flames over the shell. Over the shell, spiderweb-like cracks appeared. The black flames used the cracks to seep into them.

Booooooooooom!

Just as Lady Zee jumped upwards, the black flames worked their magic. They made her cracked shell implode, creating a hole in it from which the monster's fear-stricken face could be seen looking in his opponent's direction.

"Oh, I love baking things. Hehe"

Lady Zee said out loud and raised her hand, directing the black flames created by her AoE to enter the hole she had just created over the shell. The black flames poured into the hole almost like they were in a liquid state.

Badoooooooooooooooooom!

The shell was blasted into nothingness as it was engulfed by the black flames all around it. It seemed that the monster had created a burial place for itself with the shell acting as an oven.. Especially made for the baked goods that had goblin lord as the main ingredient.

[Chapter 280 - Test Of Endurance](#)

"That was some battle, Lady Zee. Here, use this."

Jules threw an E-Rank stamina potion towards Lady Zee as the latter joined them post her battle. She caught the vial in her hand, uncorked it, and gulped down the content before saying out loud in exasperation:

"Baaah! I hate this about the underground dungeon. Tests are almost always tailored to the participants. There's no easy victory to be had in this place."

Ronny raised his eyebrows after he heard Lady Zee's complaints. He had a similar doubt when he was battling with his opponent.

"So the dungeon chooses our opponents based on our element and battle style? I can understand how it can program our opponents using arrays based on our elements. I feel that it also considers our battle style before giving us our opponents. Is that right?"

Lady Zee nodded at Ronny and took a deep breath. The effects of the E-Rank stamina potion weren't that effective for her rank. But she wanted to preserve her stock of ranked potions.

"That's right, Ronny. The scanning array we had to go through also takes our mana signature into account. The mana signature is a topic of vast study for high-ranked entities. A ranker's mana signature tells more about themselves than they care to share or let on.

At the S-Rank, I don't think the sages would care to differentiate between the F, E, and D Ranks. Our existence is like ants to them.

We obviously can't hide our battle styles and the way we behave on the battleground from an array created by a Sage ranker. So what we have experienced and will continue to experience can only be deemed normal, even though it might seem impossible to us right now."

Jules, Renar, and the rest of the novices had smiles on their faces when they heard Lady Zee's talk. But Ronny couldn't find humour in that statement. He had been a D-Ranker in his previous life. He understood what Lady Zee was trying to say on a deeper level.

"Ronny, where did you get those explosives?"

Lady Zee had kept her eye on Ronny and the rest as she was battling with her monster. Ronny's use of explosives had caught her attention the most when she saw how he had blasted off his opponent. She could make better use of those explosives in her battle style if she could get her hands on some of those products.

"Hehehe! These are called potion bombs. Let me tell you a little bit about them..."

Ronny smiled like a business about to pitch his product to his clients. He retrieved a set of vials from his storage and started explaining to his audience how the products worked. He also told the black-market shops they could buy them from that he knew had his products now. Of course, White Raven wasn't among those shops.

This was an opportunity for him to expose his local product to a wider audience. The Illuminati could buy stuff in bulk and give him instant profits. By the time he finished, the businessman and bullshittery expert in him had convinced Jules and Lady Zee to buy his pioneering items.

Renar, Viper, and especially Belar had terrible memories of the potion bombs. Belar had lost his limbs because of the potion bomb thrown at him by that vile creature. They understood the reason behind the product's popularity but they just couldn't find it in themselves to purchase something that was the indirect cause behind their downfall.

"So the first floor is clear for all of us, right? Where's the entrance to the second floor?"

Renar looked around and asked the question he was intending to ask for quite a while now. He had been meaning to change the topic of the potion bomb anyway because it was making him and Belar uncomfortable.

Lady Zee laughed at him like he had cracked the silliest of jokes before replying to him:

"Hehehe! Do you think this purgatory is a place to have easy tests and easier rewards? We haven't cleared the first floor yet."

Ronny and Jules expected it to be like this even though it was their first time. But Viper and Belar couldn't help showing signs of despair on their faces when they heard Lady Zee confirm the fears they had. They had been utterly exhausted in their battle with the five F-Rank monsters. They didn't think they could take part in any more battles anytime soon.

Lady Zee observed the novices' expressions and tried to console them with her words:

"Don't worry. We are given time to catch our breath as we have right now. Exploring the dungeons is not a sprint, but a continuous marathon. Try to rest and get refreshed before the next set of tests requires our participation."

Viper and Belar breathed a sigh of relief when they heard what could only be called good news in this place. Finally, they sat on the ground and tried to get into their peak form by channelling their ranking

techniques. Ronny, Jules, and Lady Zee had already started recovering their stamina with their ranking techniques as well.

The ground on which Ronny's squad was sitting soon lit up with a series of runes as the light particles started forming masses of beasts around them. The beast apparitions this time were all in F-Rank. But the sheer number of them made the novice rankers afraid to face them.

The masses of light particles had taken the shapes of the Wolfen beast Eren had the mortal enmity with. He withdrew his weapons and focused on the beasts' groins.

"Grab your weapons and get ready. This is a party battle. We need to stick together and tackle the beast waves coming at us."

Lady Zee stood straight up as soon as she saw the next battleground getting ready for them. Jules found something odd in her senior's words and couldn't help but ask:

"Waves? Lady Zee, don't tell me, the beasts we see right now won't be..."