

## Vile 301

### [Chapter 301 - Miscalculation](#)

Three distinct mana pulses had made their presence known, indicative of three E-Rankers executing the spells in their arsenals.

The first E-Rank male that was leading the attack took out a long spear from his storage and pointed the tip of his weapon towards approaching Ronny. The E-Rank female with a male's body, who was also taller than the male ranker, took out a crossbow and aimed it at her enemy from over the shoulder of her teammate.

Since the Sedated Perception was activated Ronny saw that the two-pronged approach taken by the duo was well-calibrated. He couldn't dodge the spear, courtesy of its extended range. And he couldn't back away from the crossbow E-Ranker pointed at him.

The spear of the E-Rank was soon coated in mana as a weapon-enhancing spell was cast over it by the wielder. The weapon's tip caught fire and it spread all around the weapon.

Crossbow arrows seemed to be made of water-element mana. It made the edges of the arrows reflect light in rainbow colors. Although the multicoloured arrows were pleasant to look at, Ronny knew their effects would turn out to be anything but that for him.

As Ronny was observing the two E-Rankers, his opponents were also doing the same. The leading E-Ranker saw that Ronny's body suddenly turned red as he started approaching him. Then the guy was engulfed in lightning element mana and a strong mana pulse was spread in the surroundings as a result.

'We miscalculated. This guy won't be easy to deal with.'

The Spear wielding E-Ranker had this thought as he got nearer to his opponent in real-time. He aimed the spear to be lodged right in Ronny's right thigh while he drew out another spear from his storage. He was also preparing to cast the same weapon-enhancing spell on his secondary weapon.

The spear-wielding guy soon realized that Ronny was not at his previous position anymore even though he observed that his spear had struck him right where he wanted it to be. That's because he didn't feel the recoil from the weapon he was expecting after piercing something fleshy.

'Damn it. The guy's fast. I should inform that gorilla...'

The spear-wielding guy thought of relying on his "gorilla" teammate more after he realized that Ronny wasn't as easy to deal with as he thought he would be at first. But his chain of thought was soon interrupted by the sheer force he felt over his chest, where his heart was.

The spear ranker looked down and saw that a dagger coated in lightning element mana had struck right over his heart. The force behind this attack was so powerful that the ranker wondered why he wasn't pushed back.

But he soon found the answer he was looking for. He felt a hand gripping his left shoulder, causing him to bear the consequence of being struck by the dagger while remaining in the same position.

Ronny's blurred image soon started appearing clearly in the spear ranker's vision. He still had deadpan expressions from before. But his eyes— the guy's eyes were oozing bloodlust.

Ronny appeared right in front of the spear guy, within his reach. He had made use of the space the spear guy had left free to manoeuvre his dual spears. If the spear had granted him extended range, it had also made him vulnerable to short range attacks initiated by the butcher.

But that wasn't the spear guy's end. He was wearing chainmail armour inside the clothes of his fire element that immediately burst into flames after it had been struck by Ronny's dagger. The fire-element mana fought off with the lightning element residue the dagger was trying to spread all over the ranker's body.

The armour's flames could not remove all the lightning residue. The spear guy felt as if his outer skin all over his body was getting numb after it was subjected to the electrical shock.

The spear guy didn't wait for long. Then he dropped his left weapon and aimed his chop at Ronny's neck. He also cast his movement spell that caused his feet to glow with fire. Plus, he adjusted the spear in his right hand so that the weapon's hilt would target Ronny's side waist.

The spear guy did all that in one swift motion as he used his movement spell to retract and fall behind where his teammate was. But he again found that the end of his weapon had struck the guy's afterimage.

The spear guy gulped after he saw the kind of opponent he was facing. He felt even more dread after observing that the guy's first afterimage could still be seen; albeit in a blurred, almost-disappeared manner.

'Damn it. I should have let that gorilla take the lead. This guy is insane. I might get killed in a few moves if I continue to fight him alone.'

The spearman thought this as he let loose his mana sense around him to anticipate Ronny's sneak attacks. He picked up on something that was coming from his right side. But before he could take countermeasures, the attack had landed on him.

Ronny had attacked the spear guy using his dagger. The latter had realized that it was the same place he intended to hit the guy with his spear.

"Aaaaaaaaaaah!"

The spear guy howled as his right thigh was pierced by Ronny's left-handed dagger. The former understood that the move was meant to make a statement. A statement meant for him— tit for tat.

The spear guy remembered his earlier bravado in telling the guy to drop dead peacefully. He had genuinely believed at the time that he was doing Ronny a favour by letting him die peacefully.

The lightning element mana had found a new outlet to affect the spear guy now. The spear guy felt like his body had suddenly gotten naked. It was as if he had become an unranked boy from his childhood again. He felt the cold the way an ordinary kid would.

[Chapter 302 - Ashton & Hilda— A Short Love Story](#)

The lightning element mana had found a new outlet to affect the spear guy now. The spear guy looked like his body had suddenly gotten naked. He felt like he had reverted to being a child again, feeling this cold as an unranked existence would.

As a result of being electrocuted, the spear guy's reaction and thought process had gotten slower. Ronny wasn't someone to let go of this opportunity. He got behind the guy's back with a spin while twisting the dagger stuck at the guy's thigh. His second dagger was going to aim at the spear guy's right lung right below the bottommost bone of the ribcage.

'This is it. There's no escape this time. I'll die for sure here.'

As the spear guy fought the ghost, his mana sense warned him of his current conditions. Ghost because every time he had tried to get to Ronny, all he had ended up with were afterimages.

But just when the same ghost was about to run the dagger into the guy's right lung from below the ribcage, a distinct metallic clunk was heard. The spear guy had found that his right side was still fine and had not been damaged in any way. He soon realized that his teammate had intervened.

"Ashton, you idiot. Fall back. I'll cover you."

Ashton the spear guy soon heard a familiar voice that had irked him for some years now. That's because the lady's voice sounded manlier than him. But the same voice that had become his nightmare was sounding like the sweetest hymn from heaven he could hear in his current condition.

'I swear to all the things I hold dear, if I can survive the battle with this ghost, I'll take that lady gorilla Hilda out on a date.'

Ashton made a pact with himself after he was saved by Hilda. She had proposed to him so many times. After seeing her body juiced-up on male hormones, he naturally rejected Hilda's advances. She had more well-defined abs than him, which was a turnoff for the guy.

But he had decided that if she could save his life here, then he would try to look past the ordinary standards of feminine beauty and see Hilda for what she was as a person.

"Yoooooooooooooou

Nooooooot

Goooooooooing

Anywhere."

Ashton's daydreams of romance were soon put on hold after he heard a voice that sounded abnormally stretched to him. The voice sounded both far and close to him.

'No. This isn't it.'

Ashton dropped his earlier perception of sound. The source of that voice was closing in on him at a rapid pace. That was the reason it was heard as if it was far and near to him at the same time.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Ashton released a determined roar and focused on his movement spell and sent it to overdrive. His right thigh that had been pierced by Ronny's dagger started spurting blood as a result. Though most of the blood was evaporated by the flames that were present because of his movement spell, some of it fell to the ground and left a trail behind.

But Ashton didn't care about the excessive blood loss. He focused on retreating because his life depended on it. His speed would soon enable him to travel quickly towards Lady Gorilla.

But before he could feel safe in Hilda's shadow, another dagger struck his neck from behind him. This time it passed through without any obstruction. That's because Ashton could feel Ronny had stacked his lightning element spell to increase its piercing potential.

As a result, Ronny's lightning enhanced dagger tore through Ashton's defensive mana layer and pierced his neck as soon as the attack was initiated.

"Noooooooo! Ashton!"

Hilda's loud and screeching yell rang in the surroundings.

Swoooooo!

Swooooo!

Swooooo!

Ashton could hear loads of arrows whistling past all around him. Hilda was trying her finest to cover his retreat. But apparently, it wasn't enough to stop the ghost from taking his prey by surprise.

But it wasn't like Ronny was unscathed. He spurted a hint of blood from his mouth, as he had to stack the Blitz Bolt spell. This was to deal with the guy's defensive mana layer in one swift move.

The arrows zoomed past Ronny. Some of them even struck him. But by then, his updated and improved defensive spell— Blitz Shield had manifested.

This defensive spell fought against the corrosive water element residue left behind by the struck arrows. It got rid of almost all the over-time damage delivered by the corrosive water element residue while suffering next to no damage.

Ronny had already anticipated Hilda would use the time he had to slow down at a place to attack Ashton as an opportunity to target him. He still carried on targeting Ashton because he was confident in maintaining his defensive spell against the barrage of arrows.

But with every hit by the arrow and every bit of shield regeneration, a large chunk of Ronny's mana was consumed away. He couldn't maintain his spell combo for long if the consumption remained this high.

That's why Ronny finally released his fire-element spells to take care of the stray arrows that were flying towards him. A bunch of fire snakes appeared all around him. They opened their mouths and executed another fire element spell on their own— the breath of fire.

Suddenly, the battle area was lit up as a mini firestorm was summoned in the surrounding area. The fire was brighter than what Ashton had conjured. The fire snakes released their breaths of fire and took care of all the remaining arrows aimed at Ronny.

'Haah! I need to break into E-Rank, like yesterday.'

The butcher thought as he retreated away from Ashton after his fire spells were executed. The butcher considered the guy dead. There was no need to risk landing a finishing blow and forcing Hilda to do something desperate while he stayed at the same place for any longer.

With his mortal blow to Ashton, the butcher had given a foregone conclusion to a love story that was soon going to end even before it began.

### [Chapter 303 - Ronny Vs. Ashilda P1](#)

"Ash! Are you okay?"

Ashton fell to the ground on his knees as he gripped his neck with his weaponless left hand. He had propped his spear on the ground— using it as a support so that he wouldn't fall to the front or on his back.

Hilda ran towards him and asked about his well being while she shot another barrage of corrosive water element arrows towards the retreating Ronny. The firesnakes that were following their caster as if they were the real deal stopped once they sensed the incoming arrows.

The firesnakes opened their mouths and breathed fire again to take care of all the arrows aimed at the butcher. With this last attack, they too disappeared into thin air along with what they had destroyed.

Ronny returned to his previous position. He then discovered that Renar and the rest had also taken advantage of the opportunity to come to their temporary base.

Ronny looked at the solid stage E-Ranker that was behind the duo he fought against. He didn't dare look at the D-Ranker because the latter could use that as an excuse to attack him, putting his status as an Adept behind him.

Ronny observed that Gerish was looking at him with his narrowed eyes. He was sure now that as soon as Ashton dropped dead, he'd join in the battle and try to end him in one sweep.

Ronny would have preferred Gerish joining the battle now that Ashton and Hilda were still alive. In that way, he could retreat using his trump cards and avoid a fatal battle with the solid stage E-Ranker.

The fact that Gerish was manning the path of the butcher's retreat made things more complicated for him. Otherwise, he wouldn't have given a second thought to abandoning all of his pawns.

Ronny had a doubt the Adept ranker had sensed his mana signature and concocted this battle formation to wear him out. He must have thought that he could use him as a sharpening stone to train the subordinates he was given the responsibility of training.

If that was the case, then his performance just now might have exceeded the Adept's expectations. Otherwise, he would have attacked Ronny's team with even more intensity. It also indicated that he had

to wrap things up faster, lest the D-Ranker decides to crush all of them without caring about Rankers' Code of Conduct.

'How's the situation?'

Ronny asked Renar through his ID stone while maintaining his vigilance. The latter also seemed to be on edge as he kept his eyes on his set of opponents.

'In one word? Bad.

Sir Ronny, Belar offers only limited help because of his handicap. Viper's injury has affected his performance too.

I have to cover both of them while fighting my own battle in order to keep them from suffering any mortal injuries. And that in turn has forced me to sustain injuries of my own.'

Ronny scanned Renar and the rest using his mana sense to confirm his analysis. The latter looked bruised and suffering from a lot of internal injuries. Belar and Viper were suffering from blunt injuries on various parts of their bodies.

Ronny then looked at Renar's opponents and understood the source of those injuries. The three out of four F-Rankers they were up against were sporting maces in their hands. The guys looked like they had practiced the same kind of ranking techniques and practiced the same type of weapon arts. As a result, they could sync well with each other.

These three novice mace-wielders were with Gerish. The F-Ranker that had come with the Adept was a Naboot user. It was also a form of blunt weapon but with an extended reach.

Ronny and his fellow Anthropes were literally getting beaten to a pulp because of the four blunt weapon users they were up against. Therefore, Renar had correctly summed up the situation in one word- bad.

Belar's condition was much more serious than all of them. He was huffing heavily. His blooded mouth indicated that he had coughed up a lot of blood as a result of the blunt trauma he had suffered after getting beat up so many times by his opponents.

'Alright. I'll give you guys a few potions to heal your injuries and boost your stamina. Plus, a few potions bombs. Wait for my instructions.

It is crucial for all of us to use the potions bombs at the same time when I give you guys a go. We'll use the massive chain explosion as a diversion to escape and run towards the tower.

If we take the dungeon's format into account, then the solo tower exploration will isolate one player from the other. You know what that means, right?'

Understanding dawned on Renar after he understood Ronny's instructions. He didn't take long to confirm:

'We would use the tower's mechanism as a way to escape from these fuckers. That's all fine, Sir Ronny. But I have a...'

Renar wanted to know if the diversion would be enough for the Adept not to follow them immediately afterwards. But before he could voice his concern, Ronny shut him up using a part hurried and part annoyed tone:

'Tch. Don't ask stupid questions now. Guys, prepare to receive your lot in one go. We'll resume our attacks once we're done exchanging potions.'

Ronny took three sets of potions out of his storage and made them appear right in front of his three companions. They immediately stored what was given to them without a second thought and bolted towards their opponents.

Ronny too didn't wait anymore and started approaching the duo he just fought against. He saw that Hilda was using external potions on Ashton's mortal wounds to keep him alive.

The injuries still sparked with small tongues of lightning every now and then. It indicated that foreign mana that belonged to the butcher was wreaking havoc inside the spearman's body.

'You had said that I should die peacefully before the start of the battle, right? I want to use that line against you. But consider yourself lucky that I don't want to irk that old foggy anymore than I have to.'

The butcher pondered this as he drew his daggers again. The battles between the groups of Novices and Aces were going to resume following a short pause.

But nobody noticed that the set of vials the butcher had given to Belar was slightly different than his peers.

#### [Chapter 304 - Ronny Vs. Ashilda P2](#)

'You had said that I should die peacefully before the start of the battle, right?

I can use that line against you. But consider yourself lucky that I don't want to irk that old foggy anymore than I have to.'

The butcher pondered this as he drew his daggers again. He looked at the angry Hilda as he closed in on the duo. She was looking at him with a lifetime's grudge.

He just snorted his nose at that gaze. They were the ones who attacked him. He wouldn't care about their love stories when they were the ones who had decided to become a hurdle in his path.

The butcher played with two daggers using one hand. He used his other hand to drink a bunch of potions and stabilize his condition just before he was stepping into Hilda's attacking range.

"You monster. Just before he was about to propose to me, you had to put him in that state. I'll kill you. I'll kill you right here, right now."

Hilda proclaimed and aimed for Ronny. The latter ignored her bravado. He wasn't a big fan of conversing mid-battle unless it was him buying time anyway.

The butcher disappeared from his position just when the homing arrows were about to hit him. That's because he had already activated his spell combo by then.

Sedated Perception

Stunning Speed

Blitz Steps

Blitz Bolt

Blitz Shield

Ronny wanted to limit his mana consumption this time. So he reduced the number of spells in his combo.

He had recovered some of the F-Rank mana using the potions. But using it for E-Rank was going to be extra taxing for him. Plus, he had already taken care of Ashton. And it'd be a while before Gerish entered the battlefield.

It didn't take long for the butcher to go behind the water element ranger's left side— away from where she was aiming at. He was about to target her but he saw that Ashton was moving towards him with his fire-element movement spell.

'I'll help my gorilla kill this bastard if it's the last thing I have to do. Besides, my death is not set in stone. I can ask for Lord Adept Jerry to fix me if we finish this fucker off on our own.'

Ashton was preparing to travel all the way to help the woman he had neglected so far. In helping her, he also saw the path to his survival. First-aid potions had already been administered to allow him to fight.

Ashton knew he couldn't battle the way he could before the mortal injury. But he believed that his grudge towards the ghost would enable him to transcend conventional boundaries. In short, the spearman was betting his life on the protagonist's luck, if he had any that is.

'Ah. The nuisance. Time to finish it off.'

Ronny changed his target of attack after thinking about it. He bolted towards the approaching spearman while dodging the barrage of arrows.

Ashton relied more on his mana sense than on his other senses in this round. As a result of which he could sense the danger approaching him even though he couldn't keep track of the butcher.

'I'll show you the real beauty of using dual spears.'

Ashton started swinging the two spears in sync around him. Standing in its centre, he created a sign of infinity around him using the swings of his weapon. This was the move he was about to perform before the butcher foiled his plans and attacked preemptively.

Ashton felt a tug on one of his weapons when he was practicing his dual spear wielding arts. The mana sense also confirmed that it had struck something fleshy. But this realization didn't deter him from giving up his weapon art.

But before he could rejoice in his short victory, he felt his stomach getting hit by something heavy. He started flying in the air in a particular direction before he could understand what had happened to him.



Ashton tried to look at his previous position while he was getting flown out in the air by sheer force. It was thanks to the armour he was wearing that he only took off the ground. Otherwise, the force was concentrated enough to punch a hole through his stomach.

The spearman saw that Ronny was lying on the ground with his right leg in a position that indicated it was the reason behind him flying off. The leg had an enhanced coating of lightning surrounding it—indicating that his opponent had enhanced the power of his kick using his element.

Ashton also saw that Ronny had left a trail of him sliding down from his initial position to where he was standing a few moments before. That meant his opponent wasn't deterred in the slightest by his weapon art, and chose a straight path to confront him, albeit in a clever manner.

The spearman then found comfort in seeing that Ronny's left shoulder had been heavily injured by his spear. The tug he had felt just before he was forced to fly off in the air must have caused that injury.

'I injured him. Hahaha! I injured this damn ghost. He is not that invincible after all.'

Ashton started celebrating his small victory as he was flying. But his celebration quickly came to an end when he heard Hilda's screech:

"Noooooooo! Ashton. Watch out. I can't change the directions of all of them."

'What is that gorilla on ab...'

This was the last thought Ashton had.

Before he could look at his teammate to know what she was talking about, his body was pierced all over by a bunch of arrows that were laced with corrosive water element mana.

The butcher had made Ashton fly in the same direction Hilda's barrage of arrows were coming from. At the cost of an injured left shoulder, he had taken care of the spearman and the incoming arrows at the same time.

'Look at the guy's smug face. Hmph! He thought he had one up over me.'

The butcher berated his dead opponent as his body started to fall on the ground. He also got up quickly and changed his position to gear up for the battle with the ranger.

### [Chapter 305 - Forbidden Spell](#)

"Ashton, Ashton, Ashton..."

Hilda frantically kept on calling her beau in the hopes that he would respond. But her arrows had finally sealed the deal for him. The spearman was dead even before his body hit the ground.

'This is my chance.'

The butcher narrowed his eyes at Hilda, who was emotionally unstable. This was a huge opportunity for him to take her out while she had been immersed in her grief.

The butcher was about to run in Hilda's direction but soon felt something ominous wash over his body. It was the mana sense of the Adept ranker that was used as a deterrent.

Gerish also eyed the butcher and released his mana sense while he retrieved his flail from his storage. The message was clear— stay where the fuck you are.

Jerry didn't show any emotions. But the old man seemed furious.

It never occurred to him that one of his subordinates would die on a mission where the risk was minimal. Plus, the guy had died such a pathetic death— set up to be killed by friendly fire.

Gerish was angry. Not because he felt hurt by one of his subordinates' death. But because his death would reflect poorly on him as their leader.

He was already facing a crunch in terms of money and resources because he was trying everything to break into the next rank. This incident would be used as an excuse by the higher-ups in the Illuminati to pay him less than what he was promised.

And all of this would be because the butcher had to fight his inevitable conclusion. Gerish was about to enter the battle after Ashton was killed. In the moment after Ashton's death, the rankers' code of conduct was also on his side. But he was interrupted by Hilda who seemed to have been sober up by now:

"Master Gerish, please wait. Let me finish what Ashton and I started. Please let me take this man's life as a tribute to his journey beyond. I hope you understand the reason behind my selfish request."

Hilda said and bowed to the old man who looked to be pondering over something. Then he looked at Jerry who nodded at him.

Gerish sighed after he looked at Hilda. Then he gazed at Ashton's body that was behind her. He put his weapon back and replied in a patient and slightly caring voice:

"Hilda, I have taught you that one should always fight with a clear head if they value their life. You should also be aware that your request just now breaches that unwritten rule."

Hilda thought that Gerish was about to deny her request. Her restless mind wanted her to plead some more. But the old man raised his hands and told her to hold on.

"Let me finish, Hilda. I've handled my share of grief in life and understand where you come from. So I won't stop you from seeking your vengeance.

Just know that your deathmatch with this punk is currently not in your favour. As long as you understand that and take some precautions, you might be able to critically injure him.

You can also use this moment to grieve over Ash's death and retire from battle. Let this old man handle the rest. But who am I kidding? \*sigh. I know you don't want to back out now. So go ahead. Do whatever you want.

And Jer, it's all your fault you know. We should have handled this punk and his buddies from the beginning. Look what a mess this has spiralled into."

Gerish finished and walked back to his previous position. Jerry didn't reply to the old man's provocation. Because he knew there was some truth in his statements. But he was an Adept. The death of an Ace member didn't matter much to him anyway.

Hilda didn't blame Jerry or Gerish. It was her and Ashton's responsibility to fight the Ace rank opponent. Plus, they had already deterred the butcher from attacking her when she was in a vulnerable position. She couldn't ask for more at this point.

"You killed..."

The butcher didn't want to talk. However, he was unable to remain silent after hearing the ranger's accusation:

"Stop being hypocritical. It was you guys that had attacked me first. You guys couldn't keep your advantage when fighting against just one person.

And technically it was you who killed him. Not me."

The butcher expected a violent reaction from Hilda after his mental jab. He wanted Hilda to get riled up over his provocative statements so that she could slip up and make mistakes— enabling him to finish her off quickly. But apparently, he had underestimated the ranger.

Hilda had a melancholic smile on her face. She kept her cool and replied to the butcher's statements without shaking this time:

"My name is Hilda. Can I know your name?"

The ranger asked the butcher with newfound calmness in her eyes. Ashton's death had changed something within her. The grief was so intense that instead of being cleared out of her system through tears, it had seeped into her bones and psyche. That had allowed her to shift gears in the way she behaved instantly.

The butcher had to answer when he realized Jerry and Gerish both were watching him with keen interest. He also replied with a blank look on his face:

"You can call me Ronny."

Hilda nodded her head at the butcher's response before saying:

"Ronny, I know I'm being hypocritical by blaming you for Ashton's death when it was us who had attacked you first. I'm sure you entered Purgatory after considering the risks involved. We all did."

Hilda confessed and wiped the tears running down her cheeks. She clenched her fist while staring at her opponent before verbally marching on further:

"And yet I can't help but see you as the reason behind Ashton's death. That's because it's comforting for me that way. It's only human to seek logic in hypocrisies when it suits us, right?"

The butcher understood that the question was rhetoric. But he could also get the ranger's point of view. So he couldn't help nodding at her.

Hilda saw that the butcher agreed with her sentiments and smiled mirthlessly. She looked at him with keen interest one more time— as if to register the guy's image in her head for before continuing further:

"I understand you a bit after fighting with you and seeing your reactions just now, Ronny.

The way you fought, the way you looked at Ashton's body when it was falling, and the way you tried to rile me up just after his death. Even your deadpan reactions as I'm talking with you speak a lot about you as a person."

The butcher didn't understand what the ranger was getting at. He applauded her for keeping such close track of him during the peak of their battle.

He was running out of patience. He would have preferred the battle continued because behind him the novice rankers were battling with everything they had. He needed to sync with them to make his escape plan come to fruition.

Under the shadow of an Adept ranker, he also had no choice but to listen to Hilda's interventions. So he didn't speak or nod this time and let her finish whatever she was getting at:

"You are one of those rare, generation-defining geniuses, Ronny. And you would have probably climbed the ranks at an incredible rate if we hadn't met.

I confess that you are a magnificent fighter and ranker. I say that without any doubt in my head or using any shred of sarcasm.

And even with all your achievements and potential, I can't help but take pity on you and those who see you as someone significant in their life."

The butcher raised his eyebrows after he heard Hilda embark on a different tangent.

"Why is that?"

As he checked on his teammates, the butcher asked Hilda.

"That's because you are a man devoid of most human feelings, aren't you? Something within you has died. I don't know what that is, but it has made you less human and more of an animated doll.

Heck, I'm a cultist myself. So I've interacted with a lot of dreadful men and atrocious women. But they all still carried some shred of humanity within them— their version of it at least. The negative aspects of human nature are also what makes them human, you know.

But you... you are stepping beyond the goodness and evil of human nature. You don't have an anchor in your life that can help you stay who you are."

'I don't have an anchor that can help me stay who I am? What does that mean?'

The butcher repeated Hilda's statements over and over in his head. Some part of him understood what she was trying to say and some emotions within him were stirred up. But he didn't let that hamper his vigilance during the battle.

Hilda retrieved her crossbow and closed her eyes for a while. She continued after some time:

"The calluses on your heart and mind are so obvious to me even when I have been with you for such a short time. Imagine how those who call you their friend would feel everyday as they try to be with you. Their emotional investment in you is bound to be met with a loss.

Therefore, I am also sorry for them.

Let's end this charade, Ronny. Hehe! Let's die together.

I'll die as a broken-hearted woman who couldn't find the love she desired in her life. And you— as an abomination that you are."

Hilda opened her eyes and smiled wickedly after saying that. An unusual mana pulse was felt in the surrounding environment shortly afterwards.

As the butcher felt the mana pulse, his expression changed.

'Fuck, fuck, fuckity fuck!

This is bad. A forbidden spell. This woman is on a suicide mission.

Reen... change of plans.'

### [Chapter 306 - Rain Of Acidic Arrows](#)

'Fuck, fuck, fuckity fuck!

This is bad. A forbidden spell. This woman is on a suicide mission.

Reen, change of plans. Give me the maximum body strengthening you can provide so that I will be ready to come out in case I need you. Do it fast.'

The butcher ordered and waited for Reen to oblige. Meanwhile, he executed his spell combo to prepare for the potential catastrophe:

'Sedated Perception x 2

Stunning Speed x 2

Blitz Bolt x 2

Blitz Steps x 2'

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The butcher restricted the number of spells and opted to stack the spells he had selected instead. Spell stacking has repercussions on one's mana circuit since it goes into overdrive or hyperdrive when it is performed while executing a spell combo. The more spells you stack and the more spells you have in a spell combo, the more stressed your mana circuit will be.

Stacking spells when combined with additional spell stacking would result in delayed spell effects and overall reduced output as well as taking a large toll on mana storage. That's why the butcher never stacked more than one or two spells while executing his spell combos.

But this time he neither cared about the mana expenditure nor the diminished spell effects. He didn't care about the delayed spell effects of multiple spell stacking either because he prioritized the results more than his initial struggles.

He didn't have the luxury of staying safe anymore. That's because he was standing up against a forbidden spell.

Casting a forbidden spell was similar to forfeiting one's life as a ranker if not immediate death. That's because it would destroy one's mana core and mana circuits and make them unranked again. In most cases, it wouldn't end there. The destruction of the mana core often resulted in the ranker's death.

It was not easy to get one's hands on a forbidden spell of their element. That's because they were legally banned by establishments all around the continent. Only someone like the cultist Hilda could get access to them because of being connected to the Illuminati.

But forbidden spells could surpass the rankers' ranks as a trade-off for their future. They would sometimes be even more potent than the transcendent spells— giving the ranker an unimaginable amount of power.

'This poor lass. I had told her she could not beat her opponent to give her a reality check. Instead, she viewed it as something she had to overcome with the sacrifice of her life.

Love can make you do stupid things. It's not that I can't understand her though.'

Gerish felt Hilda performing a forbidden spell and sighed. He didn't try to stop her. This was something she had done of her own volition. This was something personal to her. He didn't have the right to intervene even when he was her leader.

Jerry too pressed his lips against each other and shook his head, as if watching a sad play unfolding in front of him with him in the spectators' box. Hilda's life was forfeited with her latest move, no matter if she wins or loses her battle with Ronny. He'd have to report two deaths to his superiors for a simple clean-up job. That thought also annoyed him.

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The butcher received body strengthening from Reen as he executed his spell combo. This was just in time when the multiple spell stackings were going to put an excessive burden on his mana circuits. The burden was relieved as a result of the demon slime's intervention.

But she couldn't help him with his mana expenditure. The butcher needed to act fast if didn't want to find himself running on fumes amid his escape plan.

Hilda saw that the butcher had disappeared from his former spot and smiled heartily. She enjoyed the colourless expressions on his face as soon as she had opened her eyes after casting the forbidden spell.

'He can feel fear. Hehe! Maybe the guy was not as hopeless as I thought him to be after all.'

Hilda enjoyed the panic written on her opponent's face. The inevitable walk towards her death was a liberating experience for her. She imagined holding hands with her departed teammate soon after she settles her affairs here.

Hilda raised her hands over her head and the surrounding mana and the moisture in the air were starting to concentrate at one spot. Soon, a giant ball of dark green water with a radius of 50 meters was formed in the air that gave off a mana pulse exceeding the conventional standards of E-Rank spell.

An unstable mass of water was hovering in the air. As if it would lose its form and come crashing down on the ground.

"Run, you fucking rat, run. I want to see where you run off to. Hahaha!"

Hilda started laughing hysterically as she started releasing the arrows that originated from the giant green mass of water. The arrows flew upward before coming down at exceptional speeds. Therefore, it looked like it was raining green arrows on the battlefield.

Arrows that hit the ground started melting the layer of snow. Soon, the ground beneath it would also get affected by the strong acidic nature of the arrows, releasing a distinct smoke.

This was the rain of acidic arrows.

'Damn it. People keep calling me a rat even with my changed appearance. Do I come across as shallow and sneaky to people?'

The butcher had this random thought as he started dodging the mana arrows aimed at him. A stray arrow that wasn't aimed at him ended up finding a target as a result.

The flesh of Ronny's exposed arm, just below his biceps, was struck by the green arrow. It started burning while releasing a foul smell as a result. If left unchecked, the wound would soon fester, resulting in the formation of puss and something even more severe.

Thankfully, Reen used her powers to heal her master in real-time as fast as she could while eliminating the foreign mana that was trying to invade his body. That enabled the butcher to keep his cool while he dodged more arrows, which was even more careful than before.

Hilda saw Ronny leaving afterimages in his wake as he scaled almost the entire battleground with his run.. Although her internal condition was getting worse, she found joy in the fact that she would soon take care of Ashton's killer with her own hands.

### [Chapter 307 - Countdown](#)

Although her internal condition was getting worse, Hilda found joy in the fact that she would soon take care of Ashton's killer with her own hands. At the same time, she applauded Ronny in her head for surviving till here despite the odds stacked against him.

'Jer, what do you think? The guy's speed seems abnormal even if we take his lightning element into account.'

Gerish contacted the Adept ranker he had known for so long and asked him about Ronny after watching him battle the way he battled. Jerry confirmed his suspicions:

'You've not turned senile after all. That's right. Ronny's perception of danger is too sharp to be attributed to the speed boost provided by the lightning element. Even while maintaining his speed, he almost has no blind spots.

I'd say he is using a time-element artefact or something similar to help him fight this way. He doesn't have the mana signature of a time element spell.

And since even I can't detect it, the time-element artefact must be of transcendent grade. It's a higher ranked treasure that can still be used by a lower-ranked rat like him. Hehe! You know what that means, right?'

Jerry asked while flashing a mild smile on his face as he looked at Gerish from a distance. The latter also showed his only two front teeth while replying:

'That means the death of two Aces is worth it if we can get our hands on this treasure. Hahaha! And here I was worrying about what I should say in my report. This is terrific. I want to finish the bastard right off to get my hands on that treasure.'

Jerry nodded at Gerish's suggestion before responding:

'That's right. It might sound like overkill. But in about a minute, we'll both move in and kill this rat and all his friends in one sweep.'

We've already respected Hilda's dying wish by staying put this long. We'll give her one more minute and see if she can wrap things for us. Either way, stay on standby and wait for my instructions.'

Jerry had decided to forget his rank and kill the Ace ranker in about a minute because he had realized that Ronny was carrying a treasure with him. The guy had started a countdown in his head as he watched the battle unfolding with great interest.

Meanwhile, Hilda was busy enjoying every moment of her revenge with her dying breaths. She wiped the stream of blood from the corners of her mouth and said loudly:

"Hahaha! I must say that you are pretty skilled at running, Ronny. But how long can you keep up your struggle?"

What's there in life that a guy like you finds interesting? Maybe in death, we will find our salvation. You should accept your fate and die with me.

Incessant Rain of Green Death!"

Hilda talked ecstatically as she guided some of her arrows towards Ronny's presence she was feeling with her mana sense. She had created a dense shower of arrows around herself to keep Ronny from approaching her. Meanwhile, she guided some of the arrows to target her constantly moving opponent.

'Erni, this is not sustainable. Let me out. You are hurting yourself this way. I'll finish them all as fast as we can before we leave this place.'

Reen pleaded with her master as she fixed the freshly opened wounds that kept popping all over his body. Ronny denied her while dodging some more arrows, only to end up trading them for a reduced number of arrows.

'Listen to me, Reen. If I'm right, this will not be the only team the Illuminati has tasked for the cleanup. I don't know what kind of arrangements they must have made at this place over these years. We risk....'

Ronny used both of his time-element spells to observe the only relatively safe patch amid the acid arrow rain. He made his way there while continuing his talk with Reen:

'We risk getting everyone on our back at the cost of taking care of only one team led by an Adept ranker. What if a Master ranker is tasked with capturing us after they find out your rank?'



That being said, it'd be foolish to think about the future if I didn't have my present secured. Don't worry though. Contrary to what the situation entails, I'm not a masochist.

You'll make your appearance. We just need a solid opening for you to do so. I'll tell you when. Stay prepared.'

He kept an eye on his surroundings as well as his teammates. He spread his mana sense further and observed Belar's condition specifically.

Belar was barely surviving against his opponent, that too with his fellow anthropes' help. He would often rely on them to defend against the attacks aimed at him.

'Now's the time.'

The butcher thought to himself and gave commands to his teammates over his ID stone:

'Guys, it's about time we said goodbye to these fuckers. Remember, you need to retreat to your left as soon as you throw the vials I've given you.

We need to be in sync for this to work. The drop will take place within 3...'

The butcher dodged some more arrows while giving instructions to the Anthropes. By now almost all of the clothes he had worn were in tatters because of the acidic nature of the arrows. He also had red patches all over his body that would release smoke because of the instant corrosion and regeneration that took place.

The butcher's mana storage was expanding at a rapid pace. The mana circuits were stressed as they were. Plus, all the running had shaved off his stamina.

He threw his daggers in the air with an impressive force. He threw them towards Hilda while imbuing them with enough mana to fight off the corrosive arrows that the daggers would encounter in their paths.

'...2...'

The butcher took out a set of vials from his storage and held them by his mouth as he was running towards Hilda. Next, he retrieved his katars— Dicerus Left and Right.

'...1...'

The butcher said this to his team as he gripped his freshly drawn weapons. The clothes on his body had disappeared by now. His chainmail armour, which he wore inside his clothes, barely adhered to his torso. He was basically naked from his waist down.

The butcher stepped into the inner circle of the concentrated rain of arrows surrounding Hilda. Some of his flesh started melting despite him concentrating on his defensive mana layer as a result of the increased acidic contact.

'...0...'

[Chapter 308 - Farewell Advice](#)

'...0...'

The butcher finished the countdown on his communication channel and emptied the contents in the vials in his mouth by tilting his head upwards.

The ranger had stopped caring about her safety. She had kept a dense layer of arrow rain around her so that she could stay safe until Ronny was killed.

That carelessness towards her own life had enabled the butcher to make his plan work against Hilda. Despite the fact that she was a ranger - a class whose long-range spells could allow her to take so many countermeasures against him.

The butcher stopped executing his time element spells and replaced them with different spells in his repertoire.

'Blitz Bolt

Blitz Shield

Blitz Shield

Fire snake'

A series of blasts occurred behind the butcher's back. There were a few small blast noises followed by a much louder, more potent one.

The butcher didn't look behind his back when he heard the blasts go off. He flashed a wide grin and contacted his demon beast in his head:

'Hehe! Reen, you know what to do.'

The butcher remembered what Hilda had said to him as he was approaching her. He couldn't help strengthening his resolve in his head before he dealt a final blow to his opponent

'Will we find our salvation in death? I should just accept my fate and die with you?

It is presumptuous of you to think that death will give you salvation when you have never died. I have died so I know. It's not a place I want to visit ever again.

Abomination as I may be, I'm at least not stupid enough to think of such suicidal thoughts. If straying away from humanity can give me the power I want, then I shall walk further on this path than anyone.

Heh! I can indeed help you though if you want to get to your happy place.'

Hilda saw that the butcher was smiling at her as he came within a few meters of distance from her. She was preparing to confront him verbally. But she observed that a small, slimy mass had flown over her head and stopped her speech.

She wanted to see what it was but the confrontation with Ronny was almost upon her. So she ignored a small mass that she couldn't sense anything out of and concentrated all her senses on the butcher.

The fire snakes appeared first around Ronny amid the rain of acidic arrows, then shot forth ahead of their caster. Their mana bodies would get damaged by the acidic arrows. But the butcher's mana would soon heal the damaged parts.

Ronny knew his mana consumption when he got close to Hilda would be enormous. The fire snakes were an instrumental part of his escape plan. So he had to maintain their existence amid the shower of acidic arrows.

That's why he had drunk a bunch of F-Rank mana potions at the same time without worrying about their repercussions. That gave him the ability to retain the fire snakes and execute all his other spells at the same time.

"You think your pet snakes can stop me? I told you, your death is as inevitable as mine.

It makes my job a lot easier now that you're in my range. Pay for killing Ashton with your life. Hahaha!"

Hilda said and felt exhilarated. Now that the butcher was in range, all she had to do was drop the giant ball of acid that was barely hovering over their heads. This would end both their lives.

The fire snakes walked past Hilda and marched on behind her back instead of attacking her. Hilda had a blank face after she saw that the fire snakes weren't meant to attack her.

The ranger didn't understand what Ronny was aiming at. But not that it mattered to her.

The butcher charged his weapons with his offensive spell and approached the ranger who was practically defenceless without the crossbow in her hand.

She aimed her crossbow amusingly at her opponent and fired a barrage of water-element arrows. The butcher deflected those arrows effortlessly with his weapons before closing the distance for good.

Pinchuk!

Hilda's heart was pierced from her front by the butcher's first attack. He didn't stop there. He cut through the ranger's torso with his weapon arts while using his defensive spell to fend off the severe acidic arrow shower.

In addition, the butcher cut both of Hilda's arms before tearing open her guts. Since she had cast a forbidden spell, her defensive mana layer was almost drained. So it became easier for the butcher to cut her up the way he wanted.

But even after facing such a brutal assault, Hilda couldn't help laughing with the greatest joy she had felt in a while.

"You think killing me would solve your problems, Ronny? Look up and think again. Hahaha!"

The butcher continued with his attack and pierced Hilda's Adam's apple. Then stored his weapons in his storage.

"Bitch, you think I wouldn't take countermeasures against such a giant bomb hanging over my head? I've been listening to you yapping about nonsensical stuff all this time. Didn't you get tired?"

Now let me give you some advice of my own as my farewell gift. In your next life, don't wait for someone to kill your loved one to realize what you wanted to do all along.

And in the next life, don't practise a ranking technique that makes your body resemble that of a shredded gorilla. Sure, we do look for other qualities after getting to know you. But ample boobs and big butts... that's what men are in for at first sight. We are shallow like that.

Byebye!"

Hilda was left to crash on the spot by the butcher. He started running behind her without looking back.

The ranger wanted to hold her pierced neck with her hands for comfort but they were no longer attached to her shoulders. But even with that condition she couldn't help but smile. She saw her opponent making futile attempts to escape from the radius of the acid bomb that was soon going to fall on both of them.

Hilda adjusted her dying self and watched where Ronny was headed.

### [Chapter 309 - Death By Irony](#)

Hilda adjusted herself and watched where Ronny was heading off to.

'This guy is plain stupid. He is running towards my master Gerish who would kill him off for sure if the acid bomb doesn't kill him. Hehe!'

But then she saw that something or someone had appeared in front of Gerish. It was the same slimy mass that had flown over her head a few moments back. It soon assumed the shape of a beautiful young lady before releasing an Expert rank mana signature.

The sudden appearance of the C-Rank entity and its release of an Expert rank mana signature deterred the old man from making any move. He tried to fight off the dread he was feeling but it was of no use when that entity released her demon beast aura.

'What in the world?'

Hilda witnessed with a dying light in her eyes how her opponent had secured a trump card all this time. As she watched, the old man trembled and took a few steps back in horror in front of the expert rank monster.

And it felt like it was eager to eat the old man alive as a whole. The mana signature of the C-Rank monster conveyed the monster's hunger to its prey before it could state its plans.

Reen raised her hands and stretched them towards the sky abnormally— as if her hands had been turned into fleshy whips. She grabbed something that was flying far away in the air before retracting them quickly.

Before Gerish could draw his weapon with his shaky hands, Reen attacked the sold-stage Ace ranker with her newfound weapons using the same weapon arts her master was relying on.

The weapons she had grabbed were the daggers the butcher had thrown earlier before drawing out his katars. They were of the F-Rank. But Reen enhanced their potential by imbuing them with her C-Rank mana. She attacked the old man in front of her without any shred of doubt in her mind.

She didn't need the daggers to take care of an Ace ranker no matter how skilled and experienced he was as a fighter and ranker. But her master had told her to use the weapons anyway instead of using her normal method to digest her enemy.

Zick! Zick! Zick!

The daggers started chopping the old man up without any resistance— as if a hot knife was cutting through a slab of butter. Reen only stopped when she made about 100 pieces of the old man within a moment. The pieces of chopped meat only dropped on the ground when she retracted her hands.

"Reen. Now!"

Reen heard her master's voice and knew it was about time to rescue him from his impending doom. She stretched her hand and converted it into a blob of slime before dropping it over the chopped pieces of Gerish. She then absorbed all the pieces into that blob before retracting it and making it assume the shape of a hand again.

Then, Reen stretched her hand in a whip-like motion towards the first fire snake that was in front of her.

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The giant acidic ball had arrived at a threateningly close distance from the ground by now. But Hilda had stopped smiling because she understood what Rooney was up to after witnessing what unfolded in front of her.

She saw that the fire snakes had been crawling in line one after the other. When Ronny shouted at the monster that had taken care of her master, the fire snakes joined together to form a long fire-element rope.

The fire-snakes lost their animated forms and stopped moving when they turned into a very long fire-element rope. It was over 100 meters long and about 8 cm thick. By now Ronny had reached the end of the rope that was closer to Hilda.

Since it was still his tweaked spell, the butcher could control it the way he wanted to use his mana sense. He willed and made one end of the rope wrap around his waist securely.

The mana consumption to maintain the solid-like form of the spell was enormous, especially since the rope's length was so exaggerated. The butcher had drunk multiple mana restoration potions for this reason as well. This was his escape plan he had to invest in heavily.

The butcher had to admit the Potion of Serenity was a one-of-a-kind gift Layla had given him that just kept on giving. He could pull this stunt off because of his insights gained while he was in the ethereal state of epiphany.

By the time Ronny was done from his end, Reen's hand had reached the other end of the rope. She grabbed the rope and tugged it towards her with all her might.

When the ball of acidic water finally hit the ground, it started spreading with a suppressed sound and caused a small earthquake. The post-contact suppressed sound was soon followed by water's natural sound when it is allowed to run wild in an open space. Plus, the sizzling sound of the ground getting scorched and burnt off was mixed within it.

The area of impact for the acidic ball losing its form was increasing at an exponential rate. The last image in Hilda's vision was that of the butcher leaving the zone of impact just before it took over him.

'He sure gave me weird but intuitive advice. Hehe! I shall follow it if I can.'

This was the last thought Hilda had before her body was consumed by the same acidic water she had created with her forbidden spell. Her mana core was destroyed a moment ago so she didn't have a mana signature anymore.

As a result, she couldn't protect herself from her own spell because the mana mixed in it treated her as a foreign entity— something that needed to be destroyed. Before she could succumb to the injuries inflicted by her opponent, the ranger was killed by her own spell and condition.

Technically, it wasn't the butcher that finished off the couple. Both of them died by Hilda's hands. If Hilda's apparition came to life, she would laugh at the irony of her situation.

#### [Chapter 310 - The Great Escape P1](#)

'...0...'

Ronny's countdown was heard by his teammates while they were battling with their opponents. But there was a slight difference of time between when Renar and Viper heard it and when Belar heard it.

Belar heard the voice a few moments later than his teammates. As a result, he was delayed in executing what he was supposed to do. And coincidentally, he had been taken a bit further away from his allies by his opponent at the time.

But Belar didn't realize the delay. Having his senses focused on the immediate battle didn't allow him a chance to do so. He dropped the vials he was given the moment he heard the command. And that sealed his fate for him.

Ronny had given him a different set of vials than what he had given to Renar and Viper. It contained three vials of the D-Rank miasma potion he had received in the dungeon as one of his rewards. There were only two vials of the miasma potions of the same rank left with him now.

The same miasma potion that had put him under the illusion and dulled his senses.

The most advantageous effect of the potion was that it interfered with the ranker's mana sense. So whether or not the ranker falls under the illusion, their mana sense would be disabled for the time the miasma was surrounding them.

Since Ronny wanted to cover a large area in a short period of time, he had to go overboard with the three miasma potions. Because he wasn't sure where Belar would be at the time of the drop.

The three miasma potions of the D-Rank getting released at the same time killed Belar instantly. He didn't even realize what struck and killed him.

The area of impact was expanded at a faster rate than that of the soon-to-crash acidic bomb. That's because Belar was also given a pair of E-Rank potion bombs that he had used along with the miasma potions. The explosion of the potion bombs created a rippling effect that aided in spreading the miasma to the surrounding area at a faster rate.

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Jerry was watching Hilda engaging in mortal combat with Ronny with keen interest. He wasn't interested in watching a bunch of novices fight with each other. He would have the same amount of lethargy watching Hilda and Ronny fight too if it wasn't for the anticipation of getting his hands on a transcendent grade time-element treasure.

'There's no doubt about it. This kid is carrying a time-element treasure.

There are no signs of time-element spells getting cast. And yet his response time to incoming arrows is too impeccable for it to be a mere agility enhancement or perception enhancement effect granted by the potions or artefacts.

Forget about the Illuminati. I'd rather keep it for myself than give it to those pompous ass bastards. I can convince Gerish to coordinate with me. I will just give him something suitable for his rank in exchange. Hehe!'

Jerry was busy scheming and making plans to betray his organization for the sake of time element treasure. And nobody could blame him. That's because transcendent-grade potions and artefacts were too rare to be simply referred to as rare. They would be seen as the kingdoms' treasures as a result.

Owning a transcendent treasure was like securing a trump card your enemies would never see coming. Additionally, the higher the rank, the greater the power of the treasure. So an Adept ranker like him could make better use of the treasure than what he was seeing Ronny doing at the time.

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With thoughts of a small mutiny in mind, Jerry observed Ronny throw his daggers long and retrieve a new set of weapons. He then observed the butcher running towards Hilda while executing a different set of spells.

'That brat is up to something.'

Jerry had an inkling of mild danger out of nowhere as he saw Ronny changing his tactics. Therefore, he contacted Gerish immediately:

'Gerish, there's something wrong with the way things are going down. Prepare to move...'

Jerry wanted to expedite their eventual intervention in Ronny's fights. But soon he heard a loud explosion followed by a series of relatively smaller ones. Then his vision changed as he saw a light layer of fog wash over him.

The response times of Jerry and Gerish had been compromised when the series of explosions took place because they just happened to be conversing. As a result, Gerish was caught off guard by Reen and Jerry was trapped in a miasma. The former ended up dead and the latter was caught in an illusion without his mana sense to help him understand what was happening outside the miasma's area of effect.

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Renar and Viper were fighting with their opponents at a distance from each other when they received Ronny's commands. They knew time was of the essence in getting out of the pickle they had found themselves in. That's why they just did what they were supposed to do and used those vials against their opponents and retreated to their left side using their movement spells.

The rush of adrenaline clouded their minds as well. So they didn't bother finding out how their teammates were doing. They prioritized their own safety for the time being and followed the instructions that were given to them to a T.

After retreating, they heard a much louder sound. But they didn't bother looking to see who had messed up. Both thought of Belar when the second explosion was heard. They assumed that he had messed up the timing of the drop. But at this point, there was nothing they could do.

The two Anthropes were lucky and escaped safely without getting caught in the miasma. Only after covering a sufficient distance did they look back.

At first, they weren't sure of what they were looking at.. Then they realized that there was more going on than meets the eye instead of assuming that Belar had screwed up.